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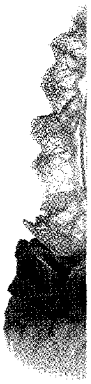

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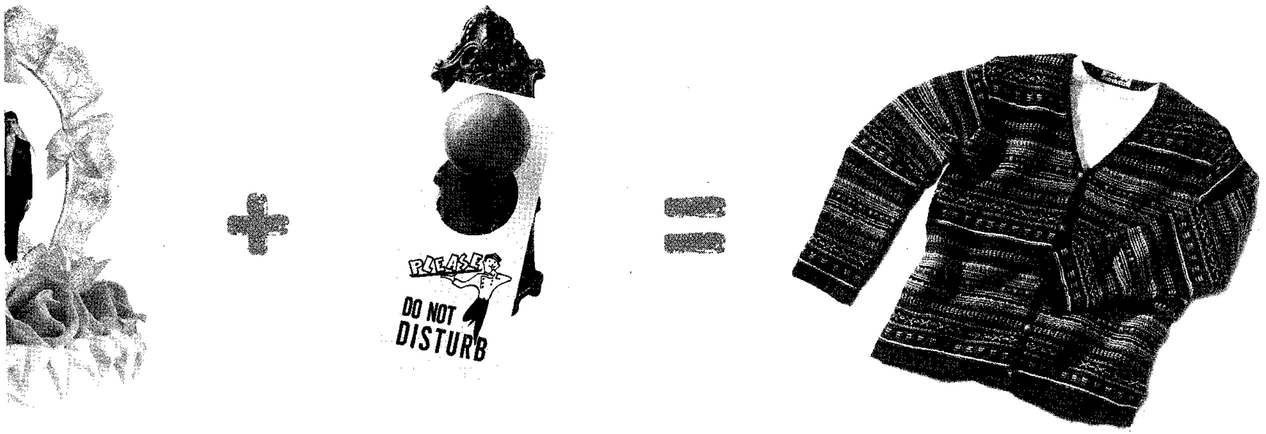

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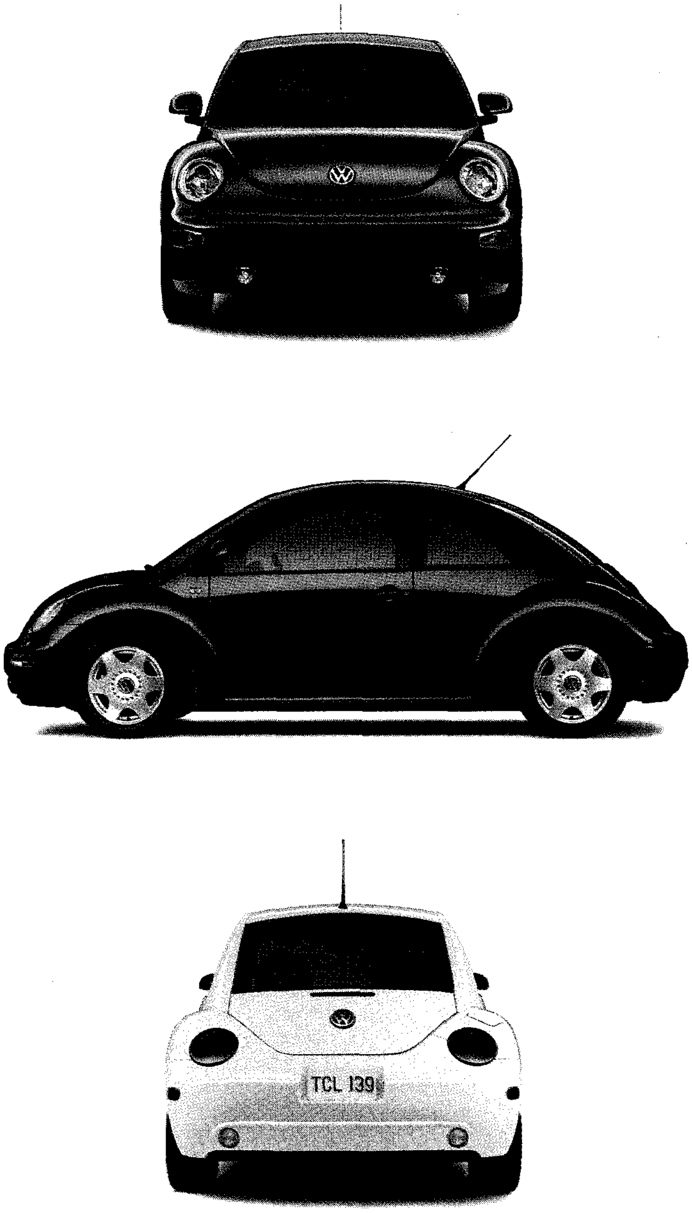
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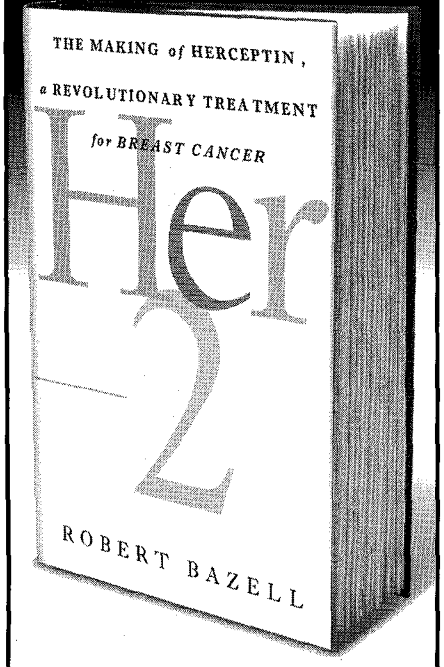
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—*Newsday*

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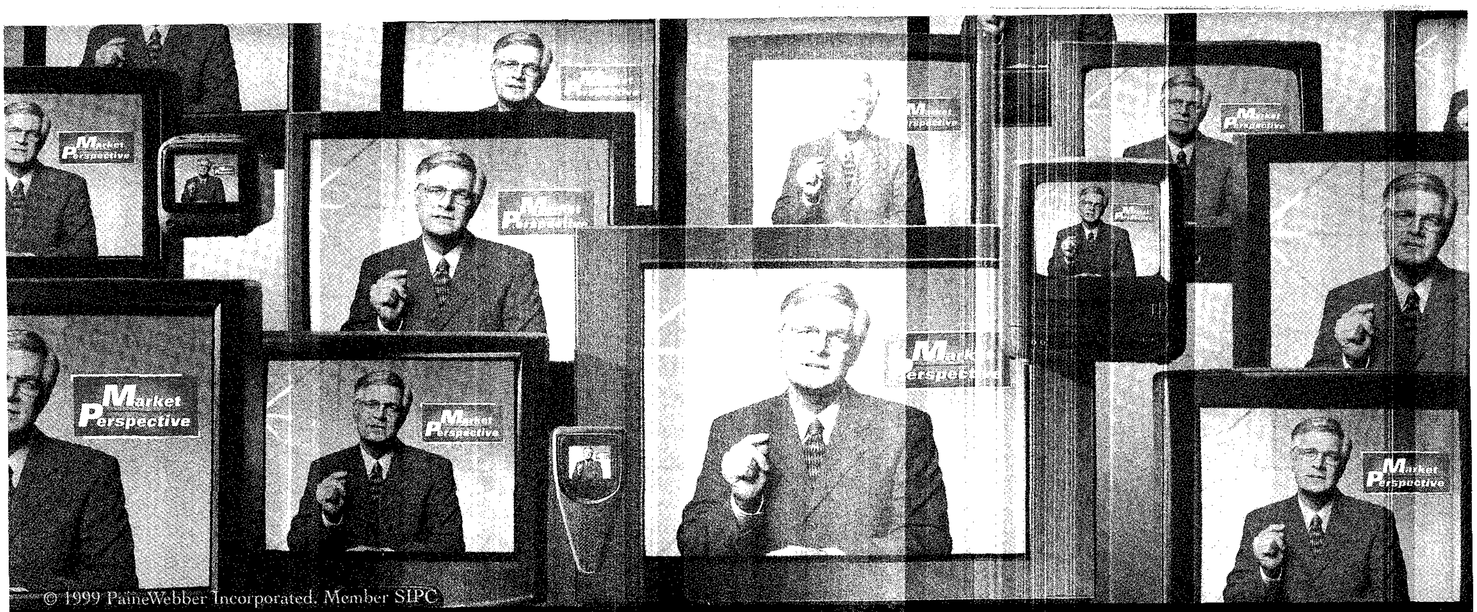

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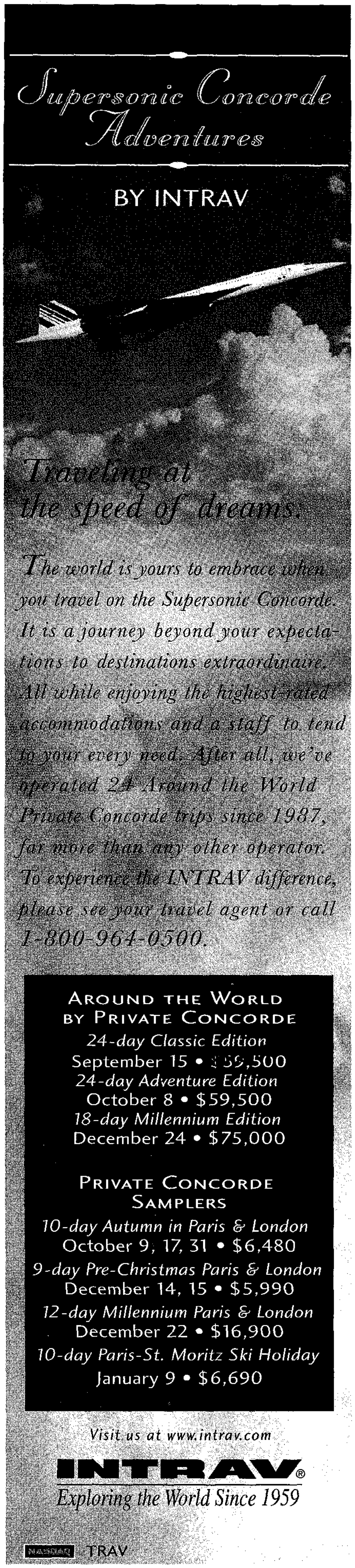
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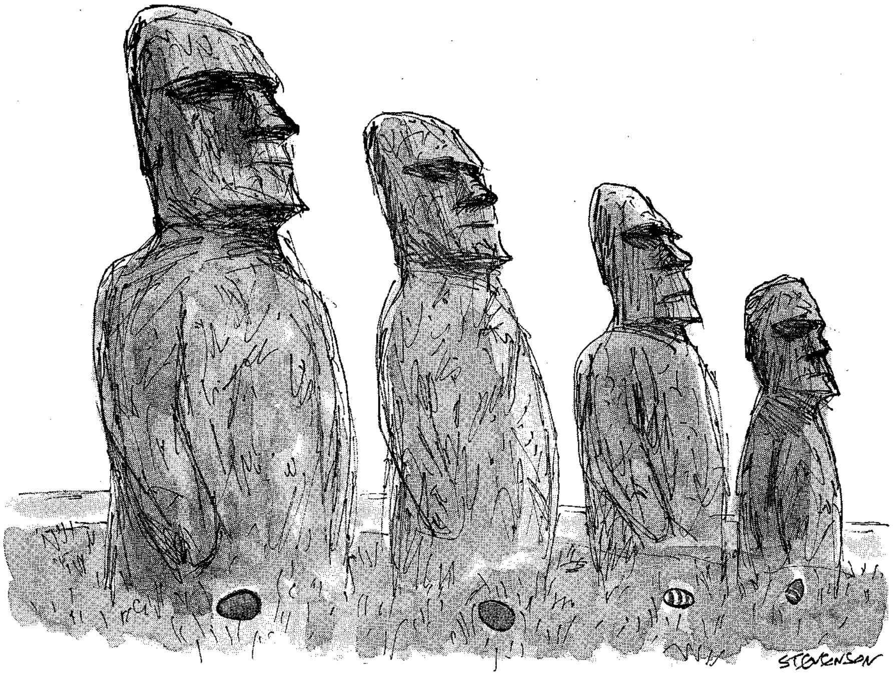

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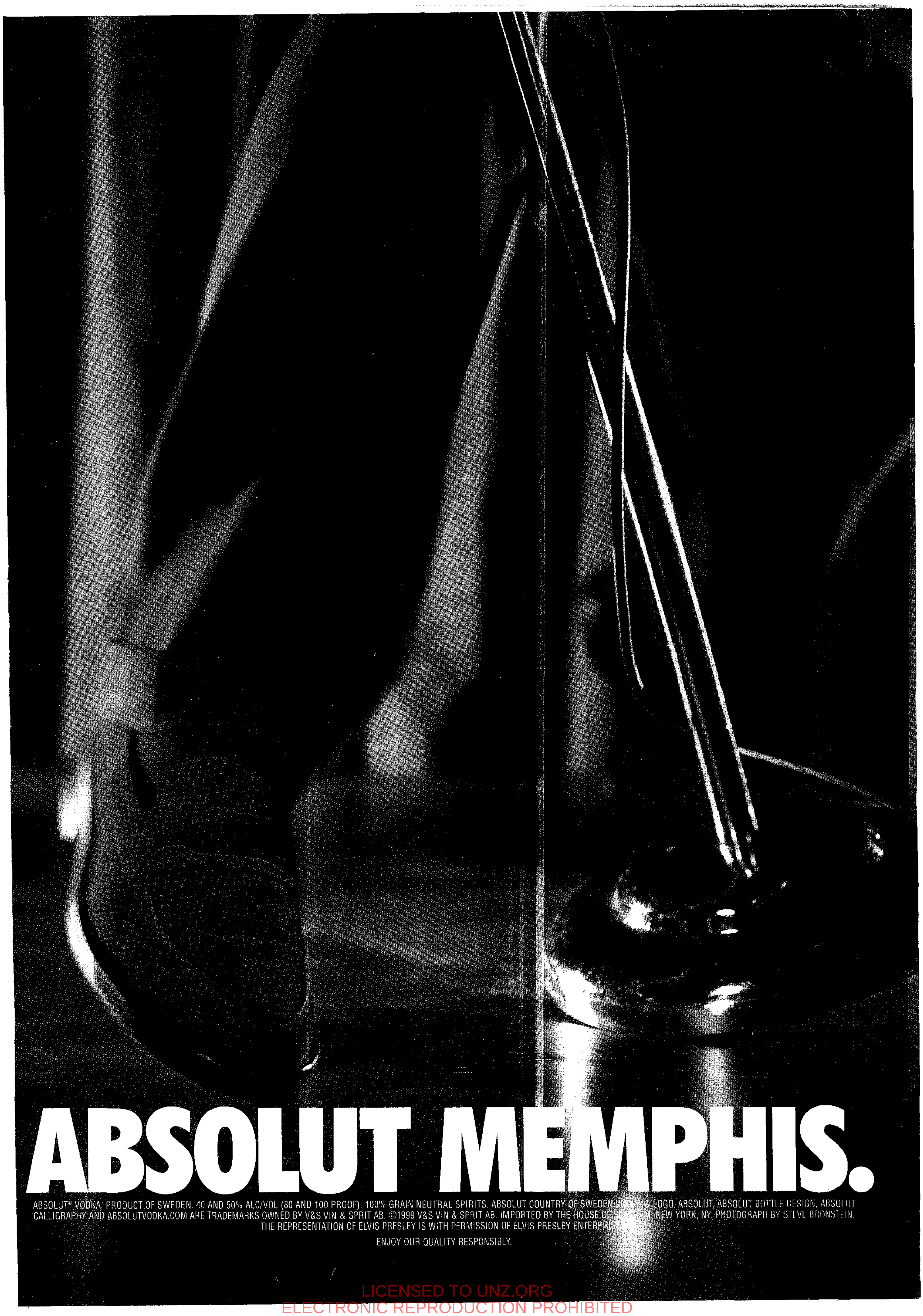

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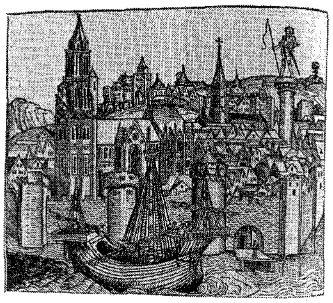

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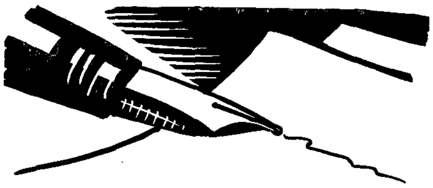

MODERN LOVE

The young Indian-American woman, Dil, who was profiled by Philip Gourevitch ("A Husband for Dil," February 22nd & March 1st) presents a bleak view of arranged marriages. Like Dil, I am a single Indian woman who was raised in the States, but among my parents and friends the tradition has evolved into something more positive—an informal social network that encourages Indian families to introduce young adults to one another. The result of this networking is that my parents occasionally provide me with phone numbers of compatible young men. That's all!

RITU GUPTA, M.D.
Miami Beach, Fla.

Philip Gourevitch poignantly captured Dil's anxiety over who her future husband will be. It's fitting that her name means "heart" in Urdu, because she is seeking a heart-marriage, so to speak. I have seen this sad dilemma in many Indian families, and the damage it has caused. But for Dil to suggest that "bride-burning is sometimes an alternative to divorce in India" is on a par with suggesting that serial killing is sometimes a life-style choice in America.

SOHRAB HOMI FRACIS
Jacksonville, Fla.

BALANCHINE'S SHADOW

Joan Acocella ("The Patient Is Breathing," February 22nd & March 1st) appears unable to accept that Peter Martins is not George Balanchine. Though Martins has his faults, he has done many admirable things with New York City Ballet. The older ballet audience can continue to sulk because Balanchine was inconsiderate enough to die before they did, or they can choose to enjoy what continues to be a world-class ballet company.

MARY JEAN G. SHEARMAN
Wantagh, N.Y.

REMEMBERING NEW YORK

Nancy Franklin's Comment about New York City (February 22nd & March 1st) made me think of my own years in New York—arriving from Florida in 1940 at age eighteen to attend Cooper Union, discovering Greenwich Village, the museums, Sinatra, Central Park, working in the round information booth in the old Penn Station during the Second World War. It was all magic to me. My ambition was to end up a very rich widow living at the Carlyle. Obviously, God had other plans. Franklin's descriptions of the New York frame of mind brought back some of that old magic.

ALICE TASE
Asheville, N.C.

As someone who has never lived in New York, I like to take note of how Manhattan cosmopolitans view the provinces. Nancy Franklin shows once again that Manhattanites believe the "cosmos" ends with their "polis."

J. GERALD JANZEN
Indianapolis, Ind.

A KINDER, GENTLER MAYOR

Roger Angell's story about Mayor LaGuardia (The Talk of the Town, February 22nd & March 1st) brought to mind my own encounter with the "Little Flower." When I was a teen-ager in the late nineteen-thirties, my family moved from the country to an apartment at 104th Street and Riverside Drive. I loved our new apartment, but the light from a street lamp shone into my bedroom. I was accustomed to the darkness in the country, and had trouble sleeping. I wrote a letter to Mayor LaGuardia and explained my problem. A few weeks later, city workers arrived and placed a shield over the lamp, which blocked the light from my room.

JOAN FUTTER
Port Washington, N.Y.

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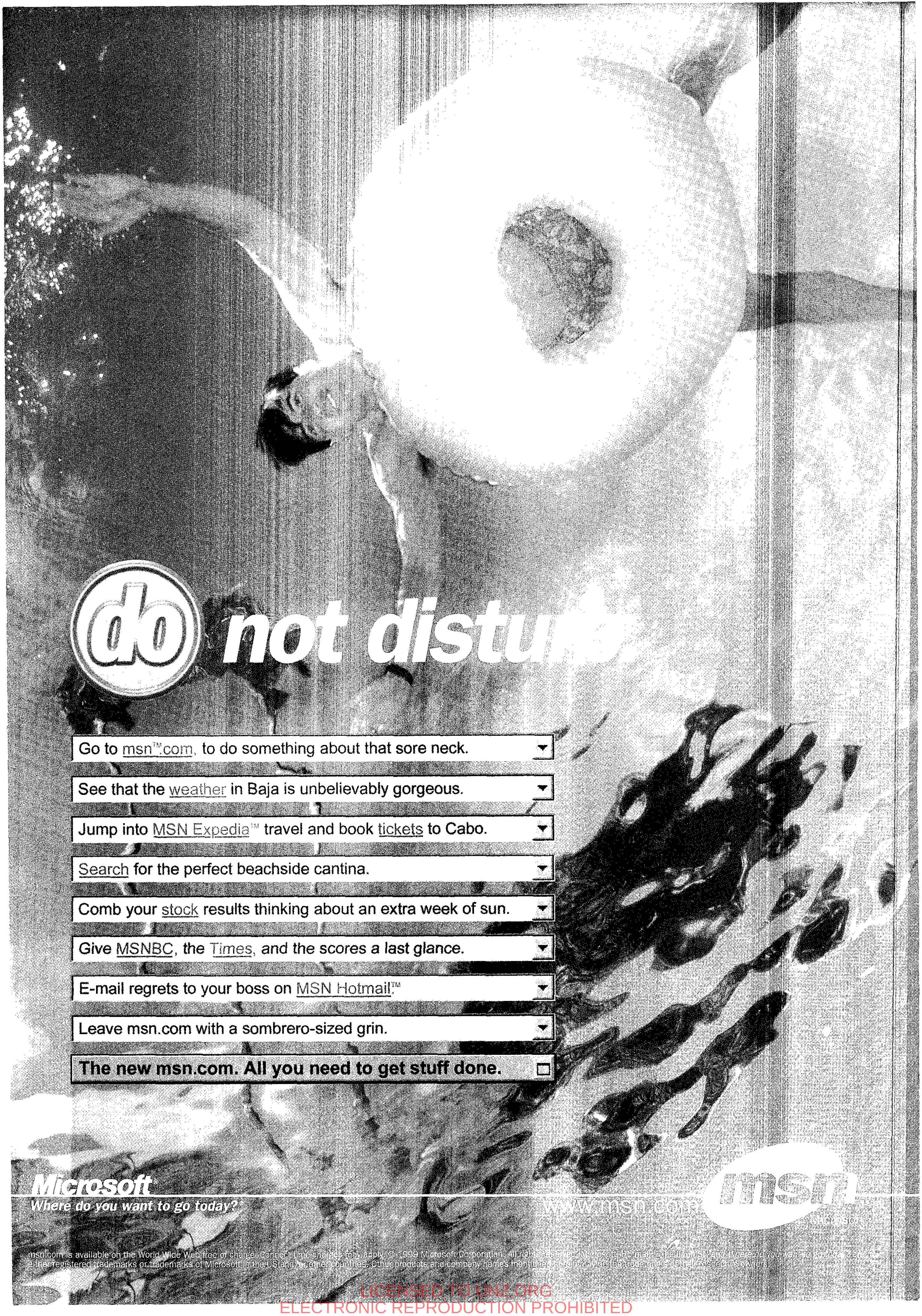

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Amy's View—Dame Judi Dench portrays a distinguished West End actress, in a recent drama by David Hare. Directed by Richard Eyre. Previews begin April 3. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

The Censor—A thriller about a female pornographer, written by Anthony Neilson and staged by the 29th Street Rep. Previews begin April 3. (212 W. 29th St. 465-0575.)

Le Cid—The Irish director Declan Donnellan's updated staging of Pierre Corneille's 1637 tragedy is set in twentieth-century Spain, during Franco's rule. Seven performances only, beginning April 6 at 7:30 and running through April 11. (BAM's Majestic Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

The Civil War—The musical. Frank Wildhorn wrote the music and book. Jerry Zaks is the director. In previews. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Dream True—The Vineyard Theatre presents a musical that follows the lifelong relationship of two boyhood friends, with music by Ricky Ian Gordon and lyrics and book by Tina Landau. In previews. (108 E. 15th St. 353-3874.)

The Exact Center of the Universe—A small-town Southern man is torn between his overbearing mother and his sweetheart, in a comedy written by Joan Vail Thorne and starring Frances Sternhagen. In previews. (WPP Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

Exactly Like You—Cy Coleman wrote the music and A. E. Hotchner the book for this new musical, a romantic courtroom comedy involving four couples, staged by the York Theatre Company. Lauren Ward and Michael McGrath are in the cast. In previews. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820.)

The Final Episode—In Linda Simpson's latest drag comedy, she stars as the host of a gay talk show during its final taping. Thursdays through Sundays at 7:30. Continues through April 18. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

Fragments of a Greek Trilogy—A revival of director Andrei Serban and composer Elizabeth Swados's 1974 collaboration, comprising "Medea," "Electra," and "The Trojan Women." Performed in rotating repertory. Preview on March 31. Opens April 1 at 7:30. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

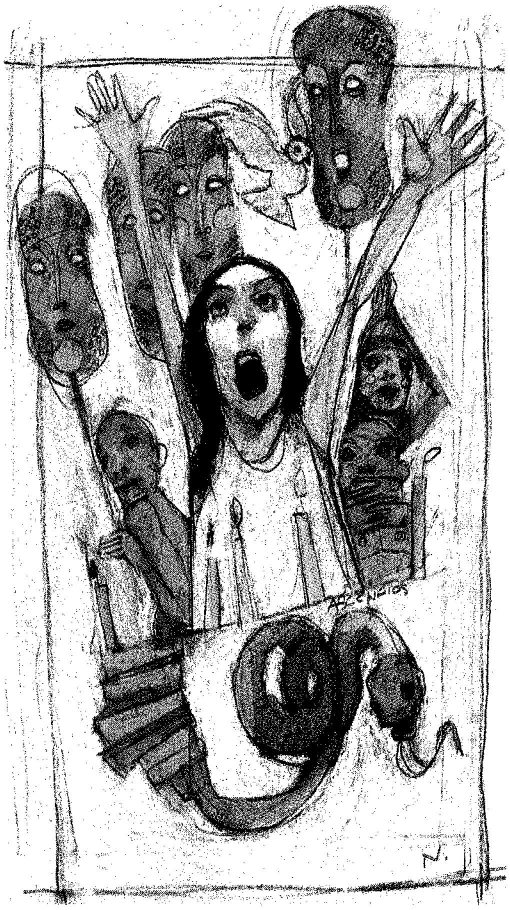
The Gershwins' Fascinating Rhythm—A revue celebrating the songs of George and Ira Gershwin. Mark Lamos is the director. Previews begin April 2. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

The Iceman Cometh—Eugene O'Neill's late drama, starring Kevin Spacey. Howard Davies is the director. In previews. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

Lake Hollywood—The Signature Theatre Company wraps up its John Guare season with a new work by the playwright, starring Ralph Waite and Kate Burton. In previews. (555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

Marlene—Siân Phillips portrays Marlene Dietrich, in a musical play by Pam Gems, set in a concert hall in Paris in 1969. Directed by Sean Mathias. In previews. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Meanwhile, on the Other Side of Mount Vesuvius—It's 79 A.D. and smoke and ash are in the air, in a comedy from the Adobe Theatre Company. Written by Jay Reiss. Previews begin April 1. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 279-4200.)



Elizabeth Swados and Andrei Serban's "Fragments of a Greek Trilogy," at La Mama.

The Pitchfork Disney—A pair of immature twins pushing thirty mix it up with two eccentric cabaret singers, in a dark comedy by Philip Ridley. Presented by the Blue Light Theatre Company. Preview on March 31. Opens April 1 at 8. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 279-4200.)

Ring Around the Moon—Lincoln Center Theatre presents Christopher Fry's 1950 adaptation of Anouilh's comedy "L'Invitation au Château," which Fry subtitled "A Charade with Music." Toby Stephens and Irene Worth lead the cast. Gerald Gutierrez is the director. Previews begin April 1. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

A Simple Heart—An adaptation of the Flaubert story, by the choreographer Annie-B Parson and Paul Lazar, who are co-directors. In previews. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)

That Championship Season—A revival of Jason Miller's 1972 drama, set during the twentieth-anniversary reunion of a high-school basketball team and their coach. Previews begin April 2. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

Tongue of a Bird—A rescue pilot (Cherry Jones) searches the Adirondacks for a missing girl, in a drama by Ellen McLaughlin. In previews through April 3. Opens April 4 at 7 and runs through April 18. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

The Weir—Four men tell ghost stories in a roadside pub, in a Royal Court Theatre staging of Conor McPherson's latest drama. Ian Rickson is the director. Two previews on March 31. Opens April 1 at 6:45. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Annie Get Your Gun—A terrific revival of Irving Berlin's solid-gold score. Peter Stone's cunningly updated book breathes new life into a show whose story has heretofore never lived up to its songs. It's played for romance and sass, which the vulnerable and charming Bernadette Peters and the hunky, easygoing Tom Wopat deliver in spades. With vivacious direction and choreography by Graciela Daniele and a witty Wild West set by Tony Walton. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

Ashes to Ashes—Harold Pinter's masterly evocation of how torture corrodes the human spirit, directed by Karel Reisz and superbly acted by Lindsay Duncan and David Strathairn. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/22 & 3/1/99.) (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

Beautiful Thing—Jonathan Harvey's 1993 drama, set in London, about two working-class boys who fall in love. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

Betty's Summer Vacation—A summer share turns bad, in a new comedy by Christopher Durang. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes April 11.)

Captains Courageous: The Musical—Frederick Freyer and Patrick Cook's musical version of Kipling's book suffers not from a lack of conviction but from a lack of conception. Most of it takes place on a crowded fishing boat, and it feels like the crew is just trying

N. ASCENCIOS

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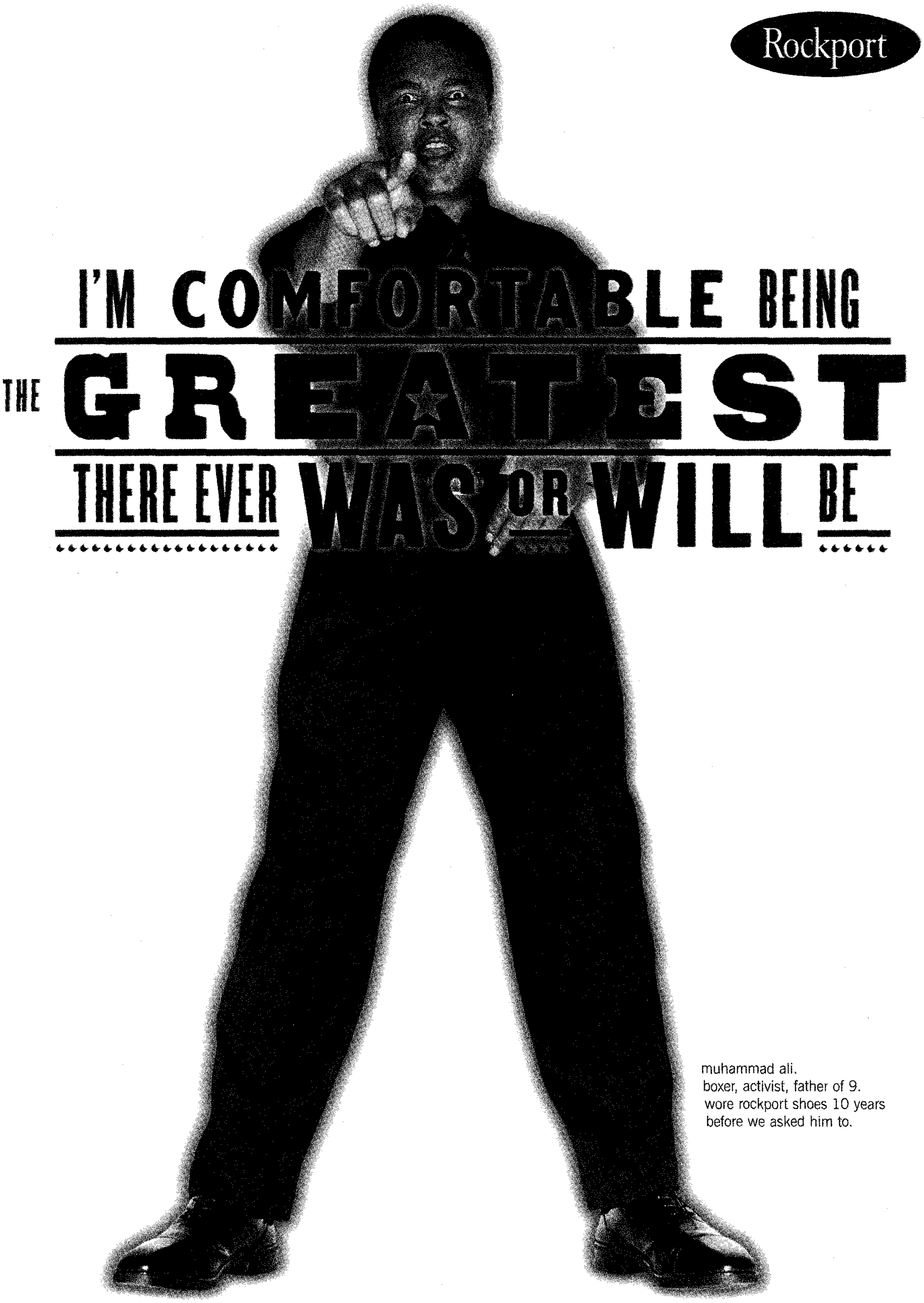

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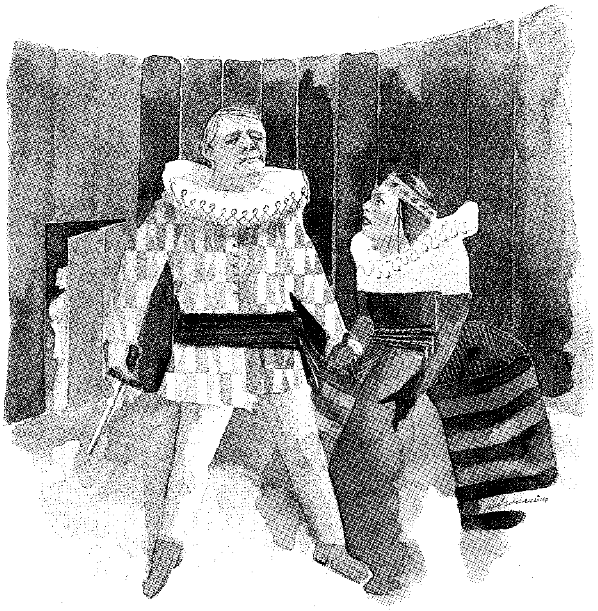
to keep busy until shore leave, when they can get some real action. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes April 4.)

Closer—Natasha Richardson leads the cast in a new play by Patrick Marber, which examines the tangled relationship of four friends. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Cowboys & Indians—Francis Parkman's account of his Oregon Trail expedition, in 1846, inspired this comic reinterpretation by Richard Maxwell and Jim Strahs. (Soho Rep, 46 Walker St. 334-0962. Closes April 11.)

Death of a Salesman—This fiftieth-anniversary production of Arthur Miller's masterpiece has to contend with an ugly revolving set, which robs it of a sense of place, hobbles the pace, and throws the play slightly off-kilter. The casting is generally uneven, but the show still packs a wallop. Brian Dennehy is almost too strong and too solid in himself for the panic-stricken salesman, yet he makes Willy Loman's misguided love for his son Biff and his crazy competitiveness hurt like a punch to the heart. Elizabeth Franz turns in the most fully realized performance, as Willy's beleaguered wife. She is as thin as Dennehy is large, yet she grounds the play and gives it a strong, almost stoic emotional center. (3/8/99) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)



Bill Camp and Elizabeth Marvel, in Theatre for a New Audience's staging of "Macbeth."

EDWARD DEL ROSARIO

Ennio Marchetto—A performance artist who creates paper costumes to transform himself into forty-odd pop-culture personalities. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200. Closes April 4.)

Everybody's Ruby—Thulani Davis's play about the murder of a prominent white doctor by his black mistress in a small Florida town is intelligent, but Davis can't decide if she's writing a detective thriller or a psychological literary biography. Part of the drama involves an implied link between the doctor's wronged lover (Viola Davis, in a strong performance), who is trying to step out of her desperate life, and the downward trajectory (a social scandal, unpublished books, working as a maid in Florida) of the Harlem Renaissance writer Zora Neale Hurston (Phylicia Rashad), who comes to town to report on the crime. The playwright, however, treats this link more as documentary than as drama. Another rewrite and another director devoutly to be wished. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes April 11.)

Far East—A drama by A. R. Gurney, set during the Korean War. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Footloose—A musical adaptation of the 1984 film. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Fosse—This steamy revue of works by the choreographer Bob Fosse doesn't reveal anything new about the man behind the dances, but it does remind us why we won't be forgetting him anytime soon. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

It Ain't Nothin' But the Blues—A revue tracing the history of the musical form, staged by the Crossroads Theatre Company. With Charles Bevel, Carter Calvert, Eloise Laws, Gregory Porter, Ron Taylor, Dan Wheetman, and Gretha Boston. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Closes April 11.)

James Naughton: Street of Dreams—Between covers of romantic tunes by artists ranging from Billy Strayhorn to the King, Naughton inserts funny, standup-style anecdotes from his thirty-year stage career, and whether in monologue or in song he's a charmer. His voice is smoothly charged, and so is his band, which is led by the superb John Oddo on piano. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313. Closes April 11.)

Killer Joe—In Tracy Letts's graphically violent dark comedy, an American family striving for a better life—in this case, a bunch of losers living in a trailer outside Dallas—hires a hit man to help things along. The terrific production is so vividly unself-conscious that you hardly feel assaulted at all. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.)

The Lion in Winter—The late James Goldman, who wrote the clumsy book to "Follies" with Stephen Sondheim and Hal Prince, could also write badly on his own. His 1966 version of the royal quarrels of Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II, turned into a bourgeois family squabble, makes a solid high-camp vehicle for Stockard Channing and Laurence Fishburne. "How was your crossing. Did the Channel part for you?" Henry asks the Queen at her entrance. "It went flat when I told it to; I didn't think to ask for more. How dear of you to let me out of jail," she responds—the medieval version of meeting cute. Since the stakes and the idiom are not real, neither are the issues. A well-managed waste of time, with a good set by David Gallo and able direction by Michael Mayer, who needs to get down to more serious business. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

Macbeth—Theatre for a New Audience's production of Shakespeare's tragedy. (American Place Theatre, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200. Closes April 4.)

The Mineola Twins—Paula Vogel's satire on women's roles—how they have changed and how they have stayed the same over the past forty years—predates her Pulitzer Prize-winning "How I Learned to Drive" and contains a lot less food for thought. Before the curtain goes up, Doris Day songs are played in the theatre and an enormous image of a torpedo bra stares out at the audience—and that's as subtle and fresh as this work gets. (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 719-9300.)

The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told—Paul Rudnick's new version of a very old tale. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

Night Must Fall—Maybe Matthew Broderick is just too darned cute to play a psychopath, but the main problem with this National Actors Theatre production of Emlyn Williams's 1935 thriller is that the play was probably never that thrilling to begin with, and it certainly isn't thrilling in 1999. (Big house, rich old lady in a wheelchair, charming stranger? *Please.*) Whoever's in charge of selecting the N.A.T.'s material owes the talented cast an apology and the audience a sincere promise to think twice before exhuming another dead play. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes April 11.)

Not About Nightingales—A previously unproduced play, the first that Thomas Lanier Williams signed "Tennessee," successfully resuscitated by the Royal National Theatre. It is a jejune but fascinating piece based on a well-publicized hunger strike in a Pennsylvania prison. The absence of Williams's distinctive cadences and of his usual psychological complexity marks it as the work of a tenderfoot, yet the choreographic panache of Trevor Nunn's production invests the script with a poetic stylishness the prose lacks. (3/8/99) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

Paradise Hotel—A look into the nightmarish yet often hilarious workings of the human subconscious is almost always what you get with a Richard Foreman play (no complaints there), and in this case his concerns are particularly libidinal. A group of unfulfilled travellers searching for sexual nirvana end up finding nothing even remotely like it. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650. Closes April 18.)

Premium Bob—The comedy duo otherwise known as David Latham and Paul Boocock have moved uptown for a brief run of their latest show, "Manhunt." (Kaufman, 534 W. 42nd St. 216-9596.)

Red—In Chay Yew's drama, an American writer revisits her native China during the Cultural Revolution. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Rollin' on the T.O.B.A.—A musical about the final days of black vaudeville, starring Sandra Reaves-Phillips, Rudy Roberson, and Ronald (Smokey) Stevens. Co-directed by Mr. Stevens and Leslie Dockery. (Kit Kat Klub, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

Snakebit—Two guys, a gal, and an AIDS test. With all the one-liners and dialogue cued by contemporary culture, this comedy by the actor and first-time playwright David Marshall Grant, like a lot of new plays, seems like a sitcom rewritten for the stage (fewer jokes, more "issues"). It has no real core to it, and throwing in the fear of H.I.V. comes off as a predictable and cheap attempt to give it one. Still, it's almost as painless as back-to-back episodes of "Friends," and the cast is topnotch. Jace Alexander directed. (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

This Is Our Youth—While Kenneth Lonergan's highly praised comedy about postadolescent heartbreak shows real theatrical promise, it is good on surface behavior but not on subtext—everything that is psychologically important happens offstage. (Douglas Fairbanks, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

The Turn of the Screw—Jeffrey Hatcher's adaptation of the Henry James novella. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes April 17.)

The 2.5 Minute Ride—In Lisa Kron's solo show about her family, she recalls a trip to Auschwitz with her father, a Holocaust survivor. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes April 18.)

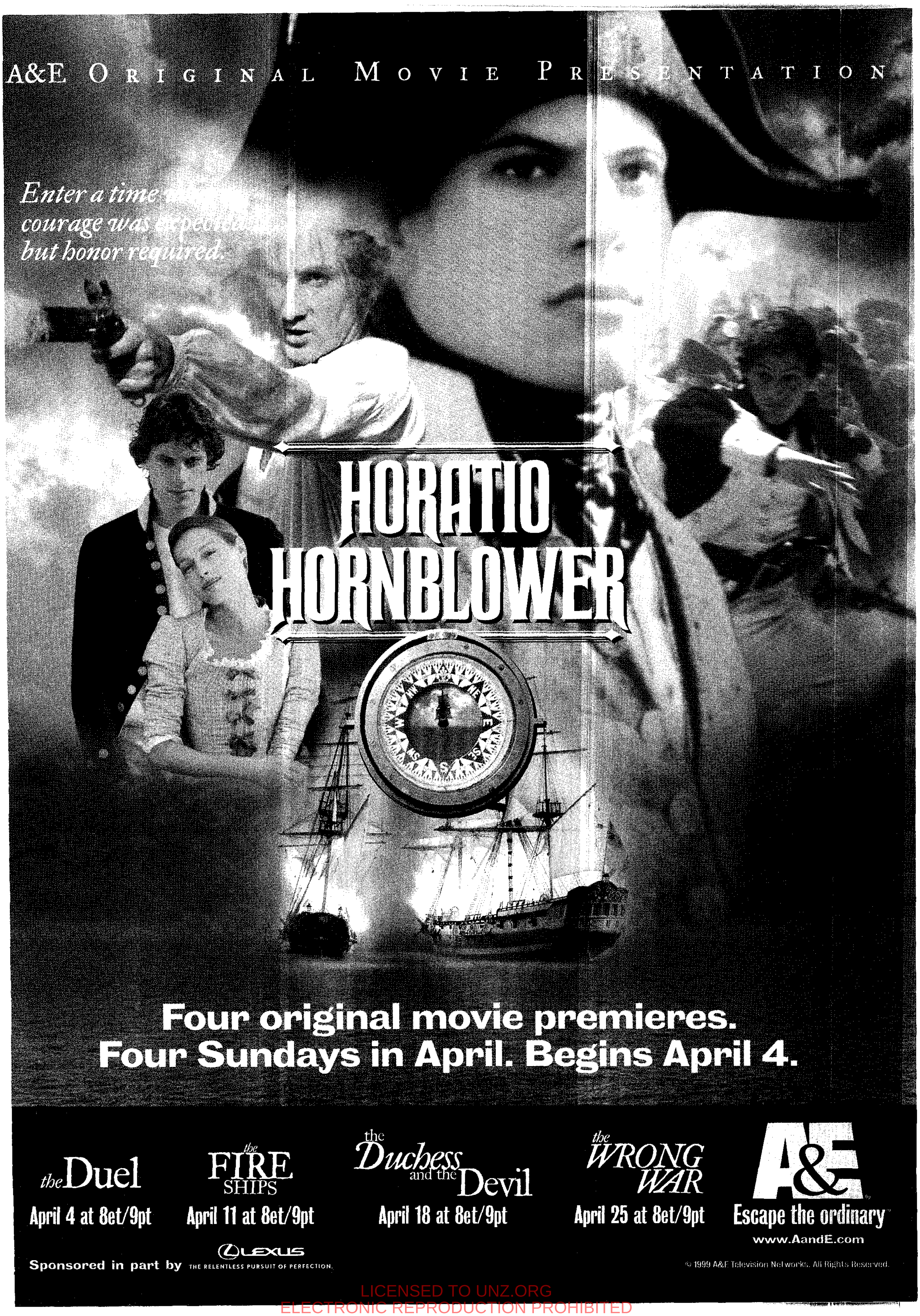
Via Dolorosa—The playwright David Hare performs his new one-man play, inspired by a series of recent trips to Israel. Stephen Daldry is the director. (3/29/99) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Wit—Right up to the last second, this first play by Margaret Edson, about the life and death (from ovarian cancer) of a John Donne scholar (Kathleen Chalfant, in an excruciating, powerful performance), has riches of acting, writing, and stagecraft. (1/18/99) (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown—A nothing burger for audiences of all ages. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

ART: Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:**



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DANCE

"Breathe Normally"—The San Francisco choreographer Margaret Jenkins marks her company's twenty-fifth season with the première of a full-length collaborative work about memory, based on the family tales of Olympia Dukakis, which have been expanded by Rinde Eckert into a play for seven performers (actors who dance and dancers who act). (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. March 30-April 3 at 8 and April 4 at 2.)

"Maria the Storm Cloud"—33 Fainting Spells, the choreographic duo of Dayna Hanson and Gaelen Hanson (no relation), add a third dancer, Peggy Piacenza, for a new full-length work whose movements range from the simplest gestures (wallflower glances, stealing of Martini olives) to full-bodied unison Morris dancing without ever losing a hold on its elusive subject, the intricacies of sisterly relations. The score, in its combination of Shostakovich and Schnittke string compositions with drum-and-bass pop, matches the quixotic style of the choreography. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. April 1-3 at 8 and April 4 at 3.)

"The Salon Project: Creation in Motion"—The choreographer Andrea Smith presents new works. He is joined by a slate of other performers, including Chimaera Physical Theatre, the installation artist Jose Luis Cortez, and the singer Donna Jewel, for an exchange of talent in the spirit of the Harlem Renaissance. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. April 1-4 at 8:30.)

Kick/Stand Dance—The six members of this collaborative company each contribute a work, including "Biological Highlighter," by Autumn Anna Luckey, "Swaddled," by Layla Childs, and "Mostly Heroes," by Abby Bender. (Context Studios, 28 Avenue A, at 2nd St. 502-3669. April 1-3 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Slayer—High-fibre, head-banging speed metal. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. March 31 at 8.)

Tamika Reggae Awards—Heywood ("What's Happening!") Nelson, Ralph ("Good Times") Carter, and other actors present awards to contemporary dance-hall and roots artists. With performances by Hopeton Lewis, Sister Carol, and several other musicians. (Theatre at Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. April 2 at 8.)

Thirteenth Annual MAC Awards—Betty Buckley, Barbara Cook, Wally Harper, Kathie Lee Gifford, Liza Minnelli, Billy Stritch, John Pizzarelli, and others turn out for an evening of accolades organized by the Manhattan Association of Cabarets & Clubs. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. April 5 at 7:30.)

Andy Statman Klezmer Orchestra—The master clarinettist plays bluegrass and Eastern European soul music with equal aplomb. Long before klezmer was hip, Statman was reaching back to the shtetl with his mournful horn and pushing forward to the New World with his mandolin fusions. His last two recordings, "Between Heaven and Earth" and "Hidden Light," brought fervent Coltrane/modal jazz and Jewish melodies together in beautiful, appropriate tandem. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. April 5 at 8.)

Marilyn Manson—The year's most unexpected failure (with honorable mention to Courtney Love, who has taken her band, Hole, off this tour after declaring Manson "evil"). The man who would be Satan has failed to raise America's eyebrows (even with his new prosthetic breasts), and his latest disk, "Mechanical Animals," is languishing on the charts. Perhaps this is because Manson's new sound, more ornate seventies glam than nineties head-crunching industrial, requires a bit too much range for his limited talents. (Continental Airlines Arena, the Meadowlands. 212-307-7171. April 6 at 7.)

"Barenaked Ball"—The Canadian band Barenaked Ladies' first album, "Gordon" (1992), featured jaunty folk songs that were tender, funny, and free of irony, which presaged a long career with little commercial success. Seven years later, on "Stunt," the Ladies (five paunchy clothed guys, actually) have their first hit: "One Week," a nerdy, word-drenched rave-up. This show should provide a blast of wit and warmth from north of the border. (Theatre at Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. April 6 at 7:30.)

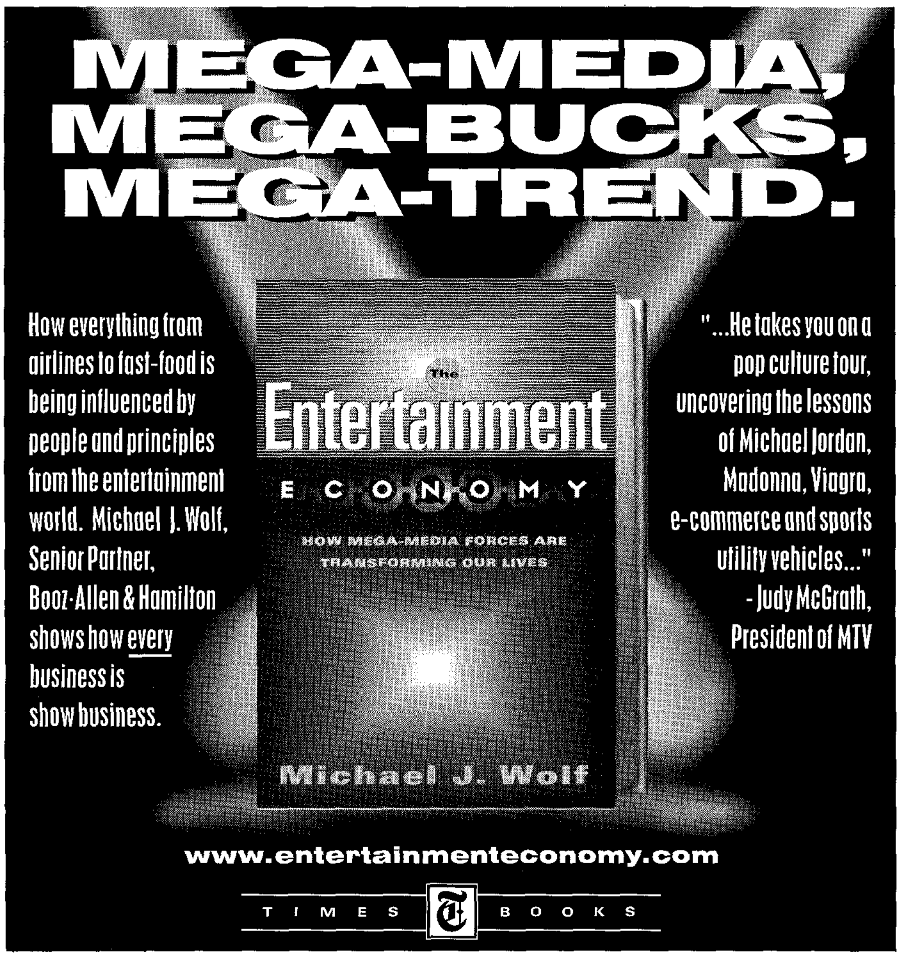
CLUBS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Arlene Grocery, 95 Stanton St., between Ludlow and Orchard Sts. (358-1633)—A narrow, dimly lit renovated bodega that's the ideal environment for three to five unknown bands a night struggling their way out of obscurity.

Baggot Inn, 82 W. 3rd St. (477-0622)—"Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk" may have closed, but the beat goes on. The back room of this West Village bar is home on Sunday nights to Jared Crawford, Raymond King, Darly Dove, Jr., and Larry Wright, the musicians who created the onstage percussion for the Broadway show. Crawford and his friends bang away on pots and pans, chairs, plastic buckets, and drums. The sticks fly. Sweat drenches their shirts. Just a few feet from the flurry, you hold on to your drink with both hands, mesmerized.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—April 2: An evening of top-shelf finger-picking blues with guitarist **CHRIS SMITHER.**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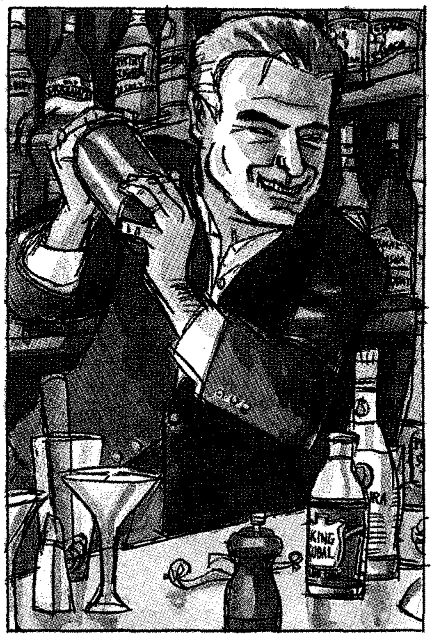
TIMES BOOKS

BOWERY BALLROOM, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—April 1: JIM O'ROURKE, the groovy Chicago-based producer behind Tortoise and other postmodern art rockers, hosts a night of designer noise with THURSTON MOORE, KIM GORDON, and LEE RANALDO (*all of Sonic Youth*), and others. April 2: ZEN TRICKSTERS. April 3: The underground psychedelic pop of OLIVIA TREMOR CONTROL. April 6: Bronx-born Celtic-fiddle phenomenon EILEEN IVERS.



BEN KATCHOR

SWIZZLER: *The mixologist Dale DeGroff has a broad smile, silver streaks in his hair, and thick fingers that are beyond compare when it comes to squeezing lemons, pouring jiggers, and stirring up tantalizing cocktails. For the past eleven years DeGroff ran the bar at the Rainbow Room, where the drinks, surprisingly, topped the stunning views. He owns more than eight hundred books about cocktails, and he never tires of running down old recipes or insisting on fresh juices, accurate measurements, and proper ice cubes. "There's only one type of ice I'll tolerate," he says, holding up a one-and-a-half-inch square. "That's a big cube, made only by a Kold Draft machine." DeGroff is now offering more than sixty mixed drinks from behind the undulating granite bar at Blackbird, a new restaurant at 60 E. 49th St. (692-9292). You might consider one of his original creations, such as the Ritz—a velvety combination of champagne, cognac, Cointreau, maraschino liqueur, and fresh lemon juice. You don't know what you've been missing.*

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—April 2-3: CAREY BELL, an accomplished disciple of harmonica masters Little Walter (Jacobs) and Big Walter Horton.

CONNOLLY'S, 14 E. 47th St. (867-3767)—April 3: The raucously rocking BLACK 47, a sort of local version of the Pogues—only with a wider musical point of view and fewer barroom brawls. Their fine American manners, however, don't reduce the ferocity of their shows (check out their latest album, "Live in New York City").

FEZ, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—A comfortable neo-Moroccan bar hidden inside the Time Café. The MINGUS BIG BAND still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

IRVING PLAZA, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—March 31-April 1: LOVE AND ROCKETS. Formed in 1985 from the ashes of the seminal Goth combo Bauhaus (the band that gave the world the sepulchral classic "Bela Lugosi's Dead"), this New Wave act fronted by singer and guitarist Daniel Ash spent much of the past decade missing in action. But at the peak of its powers (see the 1989 hit "So Alive") Love and Rockets made sweet rock with Lou Reed-style mumbling and walls of crushing feedback. April 5-7: THE RESIDENTS. Since the early seventies, this San Francisco-based absurdist outfit has been making music that predates punk and sounds thoroughly postmodern. The group, best known for appearing in top hats and giant-eyeball masks, has, in the great Spike Jones tradition, created a form of high-tech musical satire that relies on silly noises, futuristic imagery, and savage sarcasm. Album titles like the "The King and Eye" suggest the general tenor of the approach, but this isn't just sophomoric idiocy. The Residents have heroic ambition: one album, "George & James" (from the band's excellent American Composer Series), is a frightening reworking of two of our most disparate song men—Gershwin and Brown. . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—April 5: Slide trumpeter STEVEN BERNSTEIN and saxophonist DOUG WIESELMAN mix it up with folk-punk performer CARMAIG DE FOREST.

MANNY'S CAR WASH, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—April 3: Swamp-flavored funk with LITTLE BUSTER AND THE SOUL BROTHERS.

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—April 3: San Francisco's IMPERIAL TEEN play a glorious, whooshing pop, unstoppable and unforgettable. The band members all switch instruments and take turns at the microphone, and their songs are stamped with a youthful enthusiasm that belies their considerable experience (keyboardist Roddy Bottum doubles with Faith No More) and a dark subtext of dysfunction, suicide, and addiction. April 4: OLIVIA TREMOR CONTROL (see Bowery Ballroom).

S.O.B.'S, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—April 1: BASEMENT BHANGRA, an evening of ecstatic, futuristic dance music which fuses an ancient Punjabi harvest festival with the technological wonders of underground London. The d.j.s Rekkha and Joy spice the infectious *dohl* drumbeat with pinches of classical raga, old-school hip-hop, dub reggae, and the occasional Malcolm X outburst or car crash. The frenetic but friendly dance floor is awhirl with turbans and saris, and Indian film clips are projected as a backdrop. This monthly party, which celebrates its second anniversary tonight by bringing in guest d.j. Bally Sagoo, from London, makes your average world-music event seem as bland as Esperanto. Dining.

SWINE ON NINE SALOON, 693 Ninth Ave., at 48th St. (397-8356)—With the Disneyfication of Times Square at a fever pitch, it was only a matter of time until a cute and cuddly sensibility infected the surrounding streets of Hell's Kitchen. But that gritty neighborhood's sense of self (and sense of humor) may yet prevail. This new drinking establishment, which aspires to be the city's first theme dive bar, sports a giant bowtied-and-jacketed pig standing sentinel at the front door; the interior is a colorful display of painted porkers. Yet the touristy feel doesn't extend to the drinks—they're as cheap as a subway token, and the mostly male, mostly plaid-and-denim-clad patrons are as con-

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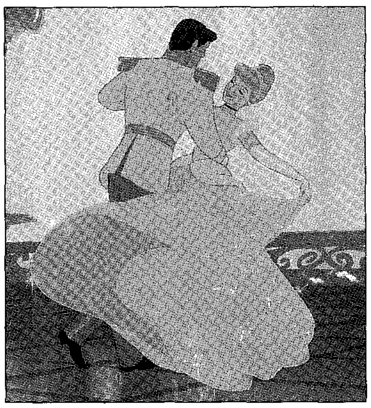

Cinderella (detail)
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tent as bird dogs in the brush. Tuesday is ladies' night, during which female patrons can spin a wheel for discounted beverages when they buy (or are bought) a drink. But women are always treated special here; they get a pink souvenir piggy bank just for stopping in.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—April 3: **BUCKWHEAT ZYDECO.** Stanley (Buckwheat) Dural, Jr., a leading ambassador of zydeco music (a gumbo of accordion-heavy grooves), is a true party professional. Vocal-cord trouble from decades of touring recently sidelined Dural (causing him to cancel an engagement here earlier this year), but the seasoned entertainer is back on his feet and ready to make even the most uptight New York crowd dance. Keep your eye on the washboard player.

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—April 1-2: Hot Tuna legend **JORMA KAUKONEN** in an evening of blues-drenched guitar. April 5: Virtuosic rappers **THE ROOTS** host a jam session with guest artists.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—April 1-3: **JOHN HICKS,** a powerhouse post-bop pianist, beefs up his sextet with altoist **BOBBY WATSON,** proving that Hicks likes a good challenge. Both men came up under the tutelage of Art Blakey, and neither has forgotten his dictums about full-force swinging and the sanctity of heartfelt improvisation. April 6: The newly formed **MINGUS ORCHESTRA** (in on Tuesdays) now augments the well-entrenched Mingus Big Band (Thursdays at Fez) and concentrates on the late bassist-composer's more formal works. Gil Goldstein conducts and contributes new arrangements. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through April 4: Two generations of cooking conga players meet when **RAY BARRETTO** and his **NEW WORLD SPIRIT** split the bill with **PONCHO SANCHEZ'S LATIN-JAZZ BAND.** Barretto came up the ranks with grand old masters like Tito Puente; Sanchez obviously did some heavy listening to Ray's classic disks as a prelude to his own emergence as a percussive heavy. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through May 1, **BARBARA COOK.** . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **PETER MINTUN** is in attendance.

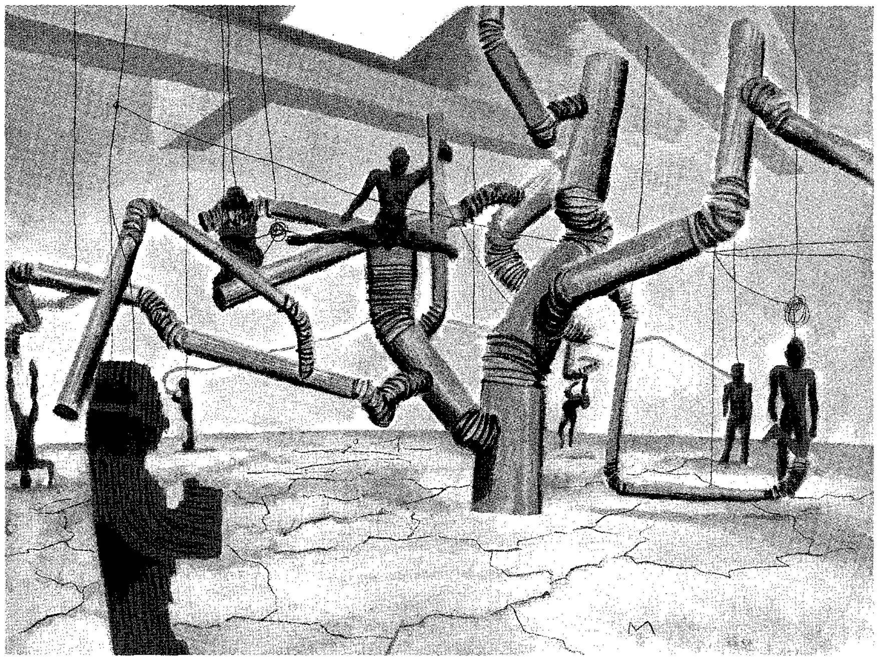
Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through April 4: The **TERENCE BLANCHARD** sextet. Trumpeter and composer Blanchard has successfully made the transition from promising young lion to respected veteran stylist. His best playing reflects his well-crafted film scores, and vice versa. Blanchard's new release, "Jazz in Film," celebrates the give-and-take between two of America's greatest art forms. Saxophonist **DONALD HARRISON** joins Blanchard, making this a mini-reunion with an old bandmate and New Orleans homeboy. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL.**

Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Pianists don't come any more swinging than **RAY BRYANT** (March 31-April 4). Imagine Oscar Peterson's technique and Erroll Garner's buoyancy mated with an authentic feel for the blues. Bryant's an original and a pleasure to hear. Dining.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—March 31-April 3: Two precision-tuned players—pianist **PETE MALIVERNI** and bassist **DENNIS IRWIN**—hold court. Symmetry and eloquence are guaranteed.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—March 31: **ELLIOTT SHARP'S TERRAPLANE.** Sharp, who's usually heard producing unearthly sounds on a Frankensteinian instrument from which coat hangers and other metallic objects protrude, also happens to be a monster blues guitarist; Terraplane is his rootsy trio. April 2: Split the difference between Ornette Coleman's elusive theory of "harmolodics" and downtown music's freewheeling spirit and you might just hit upon what a session with bassist **JAMAALADEEN TACUMA,** drummer **CALVIN WESTON,** guitarist **MARC RIBOT,** and saxophonist **JOHN ZORN** could sound like. April 3: The **JAZZ MANDOLIN PROJECT,** a trio led by Jamie Masefield on mandolin, with bassist Chris Dahlgren, and drummer Jon Fishman, of the band Phish. April 4: Saxophonist **OLIVER LAKE** has a great avant-jazz C.V., but he can also swing with the best of them. Two of those best—pianist **JOHN HICKS** and drummer **BILLY HART**—will be on hand to help kick things around.

Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—This aptly named club features up-and-coming players jamming late into the night. The **JASON LINDNER BIG BAND** holds court every Monday.



Tim Hawkinson's "Pentecost," at Ace.

DAVID MAZZUCCHELLI

Tonic, 107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—March 31: An evening of improv with saxophonist **JOHN ZORN** and friends (see also the Knitting Factory, above).

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—If anyone can restore relations between Cuba and the United States, it may be pianist **CHUCHO VALDÉS** (through April 11). Hear him once at a New York jazz club and you'll do anything you can to make sure he can return on a regular basis. Pianists are warned, though: Valdes, a terrifying conglomeration of Art Tatum, Cecil Taylor, Bill Evans, and countless Cuban virtuosos, is also capable of making you wish you had never been born. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

West Bank Café, 407 W. 42nd St., at Ninth Ave. (695-6909)—April 2: **MICHAEL WOLFF JAZZWORLD WORKSHOP.** A whole lot of shaking, banging, whacking, and general percussive merriment ensues when jazz pianist Wolff invites drummers of all nations to join him at this weekly engagement, through May 7. Indian tabla player **BADAL ROY,** Latin percussionist **FRANK COLÓN,** and jazz drummer **CLARENCE PENN** help drive the multistylistic beat.

Zinc Bar, 90 W. Houston St. (477-8337)—A young guitarist with flying fingers and a heart filled with bebop, **RON AFFIF** has a semi-regular Monday gig at an intimate space that caters to guitar freaks—just right for a six-string whiz with almost too much to say. Saturdays feature Brazilian jazz.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A rarity among jazz clubs: somewhere you'd go to eat even if there were no music. March 31-April 3: Pianist **JOHN COLIANNI** and his trio, which features the easy and swinging guitarist **BUCKY PIZZARELLI.** Dining.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Eighteenth-Century French Drawings in New York Collections." Through April 25. . . . ¶ "The Mirror of the Medieval World" is a magnificent hodgepodge, drawn from the museum's acquisitions in this field over the past twenty years, most of which have been on view at the Cloisters and at the Met. The show is organized thematically (flora and fauna, angels and saints, etc.), and represents virtually every medium of art and craft throughout medieval Europe. Among several images of the Madonna and Child is a sublime boxwood statuette attributed to Nikolaus Gerhaert von Leiden, one of only eight that have survived by this influential late-Gothic master. In addition to the religious art, there are some precious secular objects: an amusing pair of aquamaniles (water vessels used for the washing of hands) in the forms of a rooster and a lion, and some gorgeous Anglo-Saxon jewelry. Through July 4. . . . ¶ "Picasso: Painter and Sculptor in Clay." Through June 6. . . . ¶ "The Treasury of St. Francis of Assisi," an exhibition of medieval and Renaissance works, including panel paintings, textiles, wrought gold, and illuminated manuscripts, organized in conjunction with restoration efforts following the Assisi earthquakes. Through June 27. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect." The curator Kynaston McShine has a long record of historically important exhibitions, among them "Primary Structures," the 1966 Jewish Museum survey of Minimalism, and MOMA's "Information" (1970), the first comprehensive show in the United States devoted to Conceptual art. With this show, he attempts to illuminate the diverse ways in which artists have interpreted the modern museum since its birth in the late eighteenth century. Although the majority of works are from this century, McShine has included a few pointed art works from earlier eras, notably Hubert Robert's view of the Grand Galerie du Louvre as it appeared in 1796 and his apocalyptic vision of the same gallery in ruins. Robert's two paintings embody some of the contradictory attitudes that course through the exhibition: preservation versus destruction, nature versus culture, the museum as either a refuge or a prison for art. The exhibition touches on the social anthropology of museum-going (photographs by Thomas Struth, Larry Fink, and Garry Winogrand, among others) as well as Surrealist poetics (a re-creation of "Romantic Museum," Joseph Cornell's 1946 exhibition). McShine's show is also remarkable for bringing together all seven versions of Marcel Duchamp's "La Boîte-en-Valise," the Dada master's personal museum, in which he enclosed miniature facsimiles of his most famous works in a briefcase. The exhibition demonstrates that art with a pronounced, often self-conscious intellectual character may nevertheless possess the same aesthetic fervor as art that appeals directly to the senses. "The Museum as Muse" is not only a smart show, it's also a beautiful one. Through June 1. . . . ¶ "Pop Impressions Europe/USA" presents print works by Americans (Warhol, Lichtenstein, et al.) beside examples from their European counterparts (Richard Hamilton, Gerhard Richter). Through May 18. . . . ¶ "Julia Margaret Cameron's Women." Through May 4. . . . ¶ "Sight Gags: Grotesque, Caricature, and Wit in Modern and Contemporary Drawing." Through May 4. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"Picasso and the War Years: 1937-45." Through May 9. . . . ¶ "Jim Dine: Walking Memory, 1959-69." Through May 16. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—"Pale Guide to Transparent Things," an exhibition of photographs by Seton Smith. Through April 4. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Dahesh Museum, 601 Fifth Ave., at 49th St. (759-0606)—"A Victorian Salon: Paintings from the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, Bournemouth, England" offers thirty-five examples of nineteenth-century British painting (allegories, pastoral landscapes, ringleted goddesses) originally displayed at the Royal Bath Hotel, a sort of seaside Bellagio in the latter days of the Empire. Through April 17. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. (288-0700)—"French and English Drawings of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries from the National Gallery of Canada" delivers some works of extraordinary verve and wit, despite its run-of-the-mill title. The English half of the show is more fun: a hilarious, slapstick drawing by Hogarth, "Hudibras Beats Sidrophel and His Man Whacum," is set in what appears to be a wizard's study, with a crocodile suspended from the ceiling and a skeleton in the closet. Next to it is an equally funny Rowlandson watercolor of a monstrous-looking woman in jail, exposing massive breasts to a man too drunk to see them. The French counter with an exquisite Watteau red-chalk study of a pair of dandies, a dramatic Delacroix of Dante and Virgil crossing the River Styx, and a pair of Redons, one of a poet astride a huge Pegasus, the other of an enigmatic raven. The exhibit also includes fine work by Palmer and Turner, Fragonard and Ingres, and others. Through April 25. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

William Bailey—An artist known for austere still-lifes of cups, bowls, vases, and other vessels now presents his first exhibition of figure paintings. Nude women and girls, singly or in groups, are seen in tableaux, usually with a single Bailey cup in view: sleeping next to an open book (with a Bailey still-life hanging on the wall), reading a letter, or staring blankly at the viewer. The works retain the rondure and precision of his still-lifes, but when his signature mood of precariously maintained silence is translated to the figure it acquires new shadings, at once compliant and unreachably distant, like Wyeth's farmland nudes. Through April 24. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454.)

Michael Byron—A suite of oil paintings of sculptures—modernist works by Kirchner and Picasso, classical Indian reliefs of Ganesh, folk religious carvings from Indonesia and Thailand—done in grisaille. The compositions suggest black-and-white illustrations from an old art book, yet Byron's style is just loose enough to fracture the photographic effect. Through April 17. (Baron/Boisanté, 50 W. 57th St. 581-9191.)

David Dewey—Watercolors on a heroic scale, many of them five feet in length, and a few miniatures, of coastal houses in Maine. Dewey's technique is heroic, too, capturing every fine degree of transparency his medium allows; he finds the light that shimmers in seaside shadows, as well as the stark quality of direct summer sunlight. Through April 3. (Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St. 664-0907.)

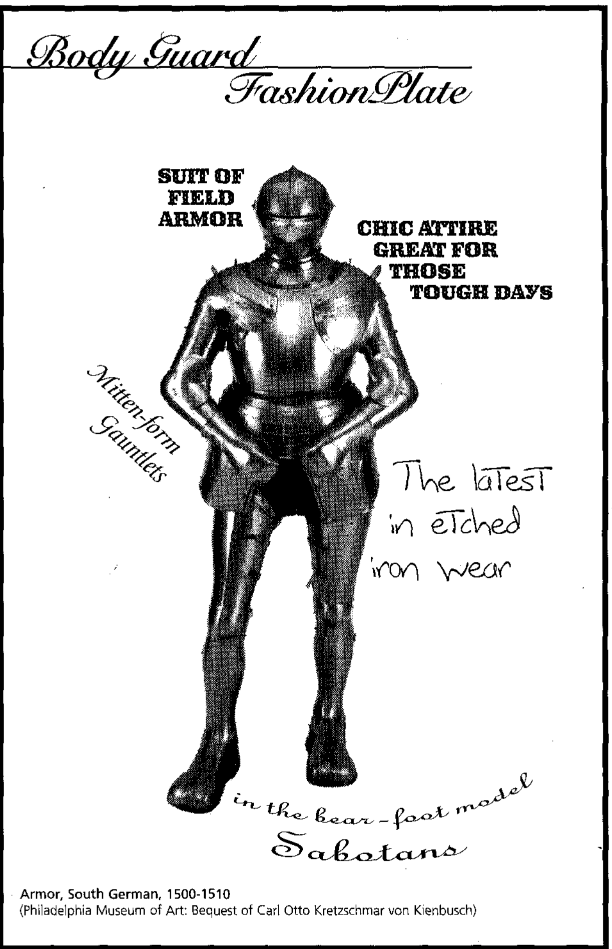
Julie Heffernan—Exuberant, bizarre surrealist fantasies, marvellously painted, of women, children, and every manner of monster and beast, usually in idyllic settings. In one work a pair of children ride bulldogs, while a pair of Cossack horsemen duel beneath a smoking volcano. "Self-Portrait as a Hairy Woman" turns out to be a painting of apples, some of which contain tiny, strange scenes: a dog with a woman's head, a couple staring in horror at cavorting badgers, a woman waving a man's severed leg at someone wielding a butterfly net in a lovely forest glade. Through April 17. (Littlejohn, 41 E. 57th St. 980-2323.)

Neil Welliver—Big, handsome landscapes of the Maine woods, boldly rendered in patches of pure, bright color, almost like paint-by-numbers. There's not a whiff of sentiment or deliberate prettiness in these canvases, yet they successfully convey the artist's love of wilderness. It seems almost an act of bravery to paint the reds and oranges and yellows of the fall foliage as bright as they really are. Through April 24. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050.)

Short List—**deborah barrett,** Baumgold, 128 E. 72nd St. 861-7338. Through April 17. . . . **sue coe,** Galerie St Etienne, 24 W. 57th St. 245-6734. Through June 5. . . . **emily eveleth,** Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227. Through April 24. . . . **richard ford and jane kent,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810. Through April 17. . . . **bill jacklin,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Open Mondays; through April 17. . . . **steven katz,** Perlow, 41 E. 57th St. 644-7171. Through April 22. . . . **robert mangold,** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292. Through April 17. . . . **michael mazur,** Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 397-0669. Through May 15. . . . **dennis oppenheim,** Helman, 20 W. 57th St. 245-2888. Through March 27. . . . **picasso and hokusai,** Yoshii, 20 W. 57th St. 265-8876. Through April 10. . . . **sigmar polke** and **john walker,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550. Through April 24 and April 10, respectively. . . . **charles seliger** and **morris graves,** Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St. 247-0082. Both shows through May 1. . . . **joelle shallon,** Interchurch Center, 475 Riverside Dr., at 120th St. 870-2933. Through April 9. . . . **beatrice wood,** Moeller Fine Art, 167 E. 73rd St. 988-4500. Through April 10.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Jeremy Blake—"Bungalow 8," photographs and digital projections that are related to a notorious poolside cabana at L.A.'s Beverly Hills Hotel. The photographs are fine, but the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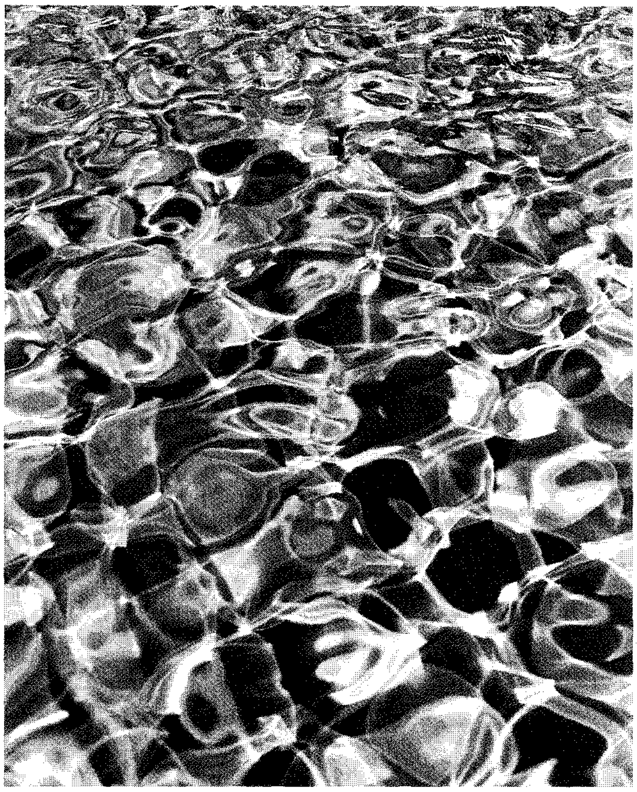


"Untitled # 12" (1998), by Clifford Ross, at Houk.

projections, with their constant mutations of forms and lighting effects, are more successful. Although one can discern fragments of architecture in these works, the dystopian yet seductive ambience they evoke seems more appropriate to "The Andromeda Strain" than to the industry shenanigans one might expect at the big pink watering hole on Sunset. Through April 10. (Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500.)

Jeff Elrod and **Lisa Ruyter**—Two young painters attempting, like so many others today, to reinvigorate the seemingly exhausted conventions of painting. Ruyter's landscapes, which are based on photographs of urban and suburban settings, pack the punch of hallucinatory Pop. Other more or less monochrome paintings executed on vinyl siding seem to literalize the conceits of her figurative works. Elrod's abstractions are spindly sketches drawn on the computer and then transferred to canvas, rather like the recent, celebrated paintings of Monique Prieto. Both shows through April 10. (Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. 727-7366.)

Short List—**WALLACE BERMAN, KENNETH GOLDSMITH,** and **ALLEN RUPPERSBERG,** Gorney, Bravin, and Lee, 526 W. 26th St. 352-8372. All shows through April 17. . . . **MARY BEYT,** Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752. Through April 17. . . . **JEAN BLACKBURN,** Deven Golden, 529 W. 20th St. 414-8456. Through April 17. . . . **STIG BRØGGER,** DCA Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-5511. Through April 17. . . . **KWANG-YOUNG CHUN,** Foster, 529 W. 20th St. 966-9024. Through April 24. . . . **ELLSWORTH KELLY,** Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200. Through May 15. . . . **MARY KELLY** and **TIRTZA EVEN,** Postmasters, 459 W. 19th St. 727-3323. Both shows through April 24. . . . **JULIAN LETHBRIDGE,** Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105. Through April 24. . . . **KERRY JAMES MARSHALL,** Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 645-1701. Through April 17. . . . **ELIZABETH PEYTON,** Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 436 W. 15th St. 627-5258. Through May 1. . . . **DANIEL PFLUMM,** Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770. Through May 8. . . . **JACK PIERSON,** Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727. Through May 1. . . . **JULIO RONDO,** Gasser & Grunert, 524 W. 19th St. 807-9494. Through May 8. . . . **JOVI SCHNELL,** Eller, 529 W. 20th St. 206-6411. Through April 17.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Barbara Bloom—"The French Diplomat's Office," an installation of objects and pictures—some displayed as the artist found them, others bearing the marks of her discreet alterations—in which Bloom endows dry Conceptualism with an unexpected, sensuous density. Her re-creation of the diplomat's office includes a rug that bears the imprint of a man's and a woman's footsteps. Through April 24. (Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441.)

Douglas Gordon—"Through a Looking Glass." This Scottish artist often works with film sequences; in this installation Gordon uses projected video clips from "Taxi Driver." The scene is perhaps the most famous one in the movie, in which Travis Bickle addresses himself in the mirror, repeating "You talking to me?" One projection shows the sequence as it appeared in the film while on the opposite wall you see a mirror reflection of it—a video-art hall of mirrors. This doubling might not seem arresting, but as the loop continues the projections slip out of synch, creating an increasingly jarring visual and audio dissonance, mirroring Bickle's craziness and, if you hang out long enough, possibly your own. Through April 10. (Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828.)

Tim Hawkinson—As in his New York show three years ago, Hawkinson transforms ordinary materials into sprawling, intricate installations, testimonials to a berserk yet compulsively disciplined imagination. The centerpiece, "Pentecost," features twelve life-size figures tapping out percussive rhythms on the branches of a gargantuan tree. But there are also tiny marvels: a clock made from a tube of toothpaste, a miniature bird skeleton made from fingernail clippings and superglue. For sheer free-form ingenuity, Hawkinson is the art world's Michael Jordan. Through April 30. (Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599.)

Barry McGee—"The Buddy System," an indoor work by the San Francisco guerrilla muralist. A good portion of McGee's work has been painted over by local authorities, a fate he shares with Diego Rivera and graffiti artists, two of his principal influences. In the current installation, Olmec-like heads with lips curled in street-savvy *froideur* float on a blood-red ground covered with hip biomorphic doodles and graffiti tags. Percussive and energetic. Through April 24. (Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.)

Robert Rauschenberg—"Anagrams (A Pun)." Rauschenberg's palimpsests of found photographic material are among his signature innovations, although what was simply silk screen in the early sixties is now "vegetable-dye transfer on polylaminate." These new paintings should help to dispel the common notion that all of Rauschenberg's good work was done in the fifties and sixties; the "anagrams" are at once obvious and complex, and the dense overlaying of images is by turns elegant, mysterious, and quietly humorous. Above all, the works sustain a beautiful mood of ghostly evanescence, perhaps because the vegetable-dye transfer produces a washed-out look, unlike the sharper delineations and brighter colors of the early silk-screen paintings. Through April 17. (Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. 431-9224.)

Christine Siemens—Mixed-medium works by a young Canadian transplant to the unexpectedly fertile aesthetic ground of Las Vegas, a scene that revolves around Dave Hickey, the influential art critic. Hickey curated the show, and it has the virtue of genuine oddness. The artist's style is perhaps best described as handcrafted interstellar disco, as in "Space Potatoes," whose spuds are fashioned out of celluplast, tinfoil, and wire. Through April 17. (Apex, 291 Church St. 431-5270.)

Short List—**MARINA ABRAMOVIC** and **ANA MENDIETA,** Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405. Both shows through April 24. . . . **DONALD BAECHLER,** Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. 274-9300. Through April 10. . . . **CAROLYN BRADY,** Hoffman, 429 West Broadway. 966-6676. Through April 24. . . . **PATTY CHANG,** Tilton, 49 Greene St. 941-1775. Through April 24. . . . **BONNIE COLLURA,** Basilico Fine Arts, 26 Wooster St. 966-1831. Through April 24. . . . **JULIE HEFFERNAN** and **NANCY SPERO,** P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642. Both shows through April 17. . . . **ON KAWARA,** Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074. Through April 17. . . . **LUISA KAZANAS,** Sara Meltzer's on View, 588 Broadway. 343-8256. Through April 24. . . . **SUSAN MAYR,** Bodell, 13 E. 7th St. 477-1820. Through April 25. . . . **NABIL NAHAS,** Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. 431-3685. Through April 24. . . . **NILS NORMAN,** American Fine Arts, 22 Wooster St. 941-0401. Through April 10. . . . **ERIN O'KEEFE,** Gering, 476 Broome St. 226-8195. Through April 24. . . . **RAYMOND PETTIBON,** The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166. Through April 10. . . . **RICHARD PETTIBONE,** Marcus, 578 Broadway. 226-3200. Through April 17. . . . **DEBORAH ROSENTHAL,** Joseph Gallery, Hebrew Union College, 1 W. 4th St. 824-2205. Through July 16. . . . **CHARLES STIVEN,** Bridgewater/Lustberg, 560 Broadway. 941-6355. Through April 17. . . . **ROBIN UTTERBACK,** Donahue Sosinski, 560 Broadway. 226-1111. Through April 17.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Ansel Adams (1902-84)—A treat for Adams devotees, this show includes a few famous pictures and many prints of lesser-known images, including the eighteen photographs that comprised the artist's first portfolio, "Parmelian Prints of the High Sierras." Through May 1. (Carter, 560 Broadway. 966-1933.)

Eve Fowler—The photographer's first New York solo show features a large, yearbook-like grid of disturbing head shots of male hustlers and several more distanced portraits of young women in their football and wrestling gear. Through April 10. (Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747.)

Robert Frank—"From the Canadian Side," a show of vintage prints from the artist's Welsh-miner series of 1953 along with a selection of recent work. Through April 24. (Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999.)

Eliot Porter (1901-90)—Vintage dye-transfer landscapes and nature photographs by the pioneering colorist. Through May 15. (Alan Klotz/Photocollect, 22 E. 72nd St. 327-2211. Closed Tuesdays.)

Clifford Ross—Depending on how long you look at these mostly oversized black-and-white prints, you start to see different things—a blurry fishing net, a mass of melting cars, strands of DNA—when, in fact, it's all just water. In the spirit of Hockney, each photograph is a closeup of the surface of a swimming pool, yet these compositions are more New York cool than California splash. Ross, who has been a painter for more than twenty-five years, plays with varying light, shadows, and ripples to bring out depth and texture, and the results, if not hallucinogenic, are at least kinetic in a way that keeps you staring. Through May 1. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070.)

Peter Sekaer (1901-50)—Gelatin-silver prints of nineteen-thirties street life in New York City and in cities and towns throughout the South. Through May 1. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)

Fred Zinnemann (1907-97)—As an Austrian immigrant in the early thirties, twenty years before he would direct "High Noon" and From Here to Eternity," Zinnemann made these somewhat familiar but well-done and subtly charged images of Wall Street, Grand Central Terminal, Times Square, and the Brooklyn Bridge. Through May 1. (Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292.)

"Au Revoir Paris"—A group show marking the closing to the public of the Zabriskie gallery in Paris, with works by Atget, Brassaï, Brancusi, Hugnet, and others. Through April 17. (Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223.)

"Retail Stories"—Works by the midcentury advertising photographer Ralph Bartholomew, Jr. Through June 12. (De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.)

"Views from the Edge of the World"—Contemporary landscape photographs by Robert Adams, Andreas Gursky, Lewis Baltz, Stephen Shore, Richard Misrach, Elger Esser, and others. Through April 3. (Marlborough, 211 W. 19th St. 463-8634.)

International Center of Photography—"Newman's Gift: 60 Years of Photography," a retrospective of the portraitist Arnold Newman's career. Through June 6. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

International Center of Photography Midtown—"To the Rescue: Eight Artists in an Archive." Through May 16. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

Short List—DAVID ARMSTRONG and PAUL BOWLES, Scalo, 560 Broadway. 334-9393. Both shows through April 17. . . . JOSEPH BARTSCHERER, Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. Through April 3. . . . HANS BELLMER, Ubu, 16 E. 78th St. 794-4444. Through May 1. . . . TODD EBERLE AND ROBERT POLIDORI, Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Through April 24. . . . DAN ESTABROOK, Morthland, 225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767. Through April 24. . . . ELDON GARNET, Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through April 24. . . . RONI HORN, Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200. Through May 8. . . . EDWARD KEATING, Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon; through April 3. . . . WENDELL MAC RAE, Witkin, 415 West Broadway. 925-5510. Through April 10. . . . ROGER NEWTON, Roth Horowitz, 160a E. 70th St. 717-9067. Through April 17. . . . MARTIN PARR, Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166. Through April 24. . . . HARRY ROSEMAN, Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St. 838-0333. Through April 10. . . . NICK WAPLINGTON, Holly Solomon, 172 Mercer St. 941-5777. Through April 3. . . . FREDERIC WEBER and AUGUST SANDER, Richardson, 560 Broadway. Both shows through April 3.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—The opening performances of the company's first production of SUSANNAH, by Carlisle Floyd, with Renée Fleming, Jerry Hadley, John McVeigh, and Samuel Ramey; conducted by James Conlon. (March 31 and April 6 at 8 and April 3 at 1:30.) . . . AIDA, with Maria Guleghina, Nina Terentieva, Dennis O'Neill, Alexandru Agache, and Paata Burchuladze; Paul Nadler. (April 1 at 8.) . . . RIGOLETTO, with Andrea Rost, Ramón Vargas, and Franz Grundheber; Maurizio Benini. (April 2 at 8.) . . . With Frank Lopardo instead of Mr. Vargas. (April 5 at 8.) . . . THE QUEEN OF SPADES, by Tchaikovsky, with Galina Gorchakova, Olga Borodina, Elisabeth Söderström, Yuri Marusin, Nikolai Putilin, and Dmitri Hvorostovky; Valery Gergiev. (April 3 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

New York City Opera—April 1 at 7:30, April 3 at 8, and April 4 at 1:30: "La Bohème." . . . ¶ April 2 at 8: "Don Giovanni." . . . ¶ April 3 at 1:30: A double bill of Ravel's two operas, "L'Heure Espagnole" and "L'Enfant et les Sortilèges." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

LISTENING BOOTH

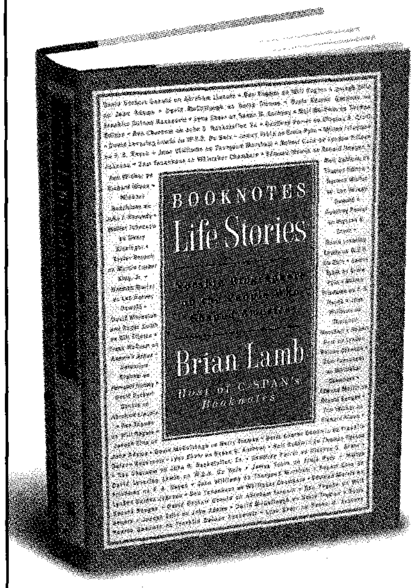
Distaff Sounds—Vivaldi's "Gloria" (RWV 589, composed around 1716) is so frequently programmed as to verge on the hackneyed, but it sounds fresh on MUSIC FROM THE VENETIAN OSPEDALI, a new release that offers the work as the composer very likely intended it to be heard—sung by a girls' chorus rather than by a choir of men's and women's voices. Music was cultivated at all four of Baroque Venice's *ospedali* (institutions for orphaned, illegitimate, or otherwise abandoned children), and especially among the young ladies of the Ospedale Della Pietà, where Vivaldi taught for most of his career. Conductor Sharon J. Paul has made a specialty of training today's girls to sing as Vivaldi's charges must have: her San Francisco Girls Chorus has recaptured the arts of transposing parts to bring the music within their range and of cultivating deep tenor registers for the lower lines. The group is tremendously accomplished and disciplined, capable of realizing Ms. Paul's vivid interpretation with professional verve. The disk also includes obscure sacred works by Vivaldi's contemporaries Giovanni Porta, Nicola Porpora, and Francesco Brusa, and the accompaniment is provided by a fine period-instrument ensemble. (SFGC 9801; available by calling 415-673-1511).

While you're at it, you can travel back another hundred years to eavesdrop on the convent of Santa Christina Della Fondazza in Bologna, where Lucrezia Orsina Vizzana was emerging as a star composer. In 1995, musicologist Craig Monson's groundbreaking study "Disembodied Voices: Music and Culture in an Early Modern Italian Convent" told the story of this community of Camaldolese nuns in fascinating detail, including the role of music in fracturing the convent's political unity. Now you can hear that music on SONGS OF ECSTASY AND DEVOTION FROM A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ITALIAN CONVENT (Linn CKD 071), a collection of twenty motets (many with texts about music) from Vizzana's "Componimenti Musicali" of 1623. Listeners will recognize the general contours of Monteverdi's musical language, but with some Gesualdo-like weirdness occasionally mixed in—all performed with chaste intensity by six leading lights of Britain's early-music establishment.

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

Mozart's Requiem—Audiences have two interpretations to choose from this week. March 31 at 7:30: William Trafka directs the St. Bartholomew's Choir, American Classical Orchestra, and soloists, with the composer's "Grabmusik" and "Ave Verum Corpus" completing the program. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. 378-0248. March 31 at 7:30.) . . . ¶ April 2 at 8: Bruce McInnes leads the Grace Church Choral Society, an orchestra, and soloists, in Mozart's Requiem, "Miserere" and "Ave Verum Corpus." (Grace Church, Broadway at 10th St. 254-2000, ext. 105.)

Orchestra of St. Luke's—The orchestra's season-long Haydn festival comes to a close on the composer's two-hundred-and-sixty-seventh birthday, with performances of his first



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TIMES BOOKS

Mass (the Missa Brevis in F Major, probably written in 1749, the year the composer left choir school in Vienna) and the rarely performed, spiritually intense "Stabat Mater," from 1767. Kent Tritle directs the orchestra, the Choir of St. Ignatius Loyola, and a quartet of soloists. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 288-2520. March 31 at 8.)

Artek—The period-instrument ensemble, assisted by eight singers, offers a Good Friday performance of Buxtehude's "Membra Jesu," a series of seven Passion cantatas, each of which focusses on a different part of Jesus's body. It's a spiritually charged work, and the atmosphere for this presentation will be further intensified by the rite of the Veneration of the Cross, which will take place in the church as the concert unrolls. Gwendolyn Toth directs. (St. Francis of Assisi Church, 135 W. 31st St. April 2 at 3:30. No tickets necessary.)

Little Orchestra Society—Dino Anagnost leads the orchestra and the Orpheon Chorale in works by John Tavener. Actress Mia Farrow delivers a narration. (Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, 319 E. 74th St. April 3 at 7. For information about tickets, call 971-9500.)

City Island Baroque Ensemble—Lara St. John and Ariel Shamai are the soloists in Bach's Two-Violin Concerto, four other soloists team up for Vivaldi's Concerto for Four Violins, and soprano Cleo Reiss performs Bach's Cantata No. 202 ("Weichet nur"). (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. April 4 at noon.)

Piazzolla Fest—An evening of music by the Argentine composer, including performances by the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, violinist Gidon Kremer, pianist Pablo Ziegler, singers Maria Grana and José Angel Trelles, and other musicians and dancers. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 6 at 8.)

RECITALS

Four Nations Ensemble—The early-music quartet plays pieces by Vivaldi, Rameau, and other European Baroque composers, and shares the spotlight with the Music from China ensemble (which performs traditional repertoire on *pipa*, *erhu*, *dizi*, and *sheng*). (Friends Meeting House, 15 Rutherford Pl., between Second and Third Aves. March 31 at 8. For information about tickets, call 718-622-3695.)

Richard Cassell—Bass-baritone, performing Schubert's "Die Winterreise," with pianist Eric Trudel. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. March 31 at 8.)

Bargemusic—Three McDermott sisters—violinist Kerry, cellist Maureen, and pianist Anne-Marie—perform Beethoven's Piano Trio in E-Flat Major (Op. 1, No. 1); tenor Robert White joins them to sing a group of Beethoven's British folk-song arrangements; and violist Paul Neubauer completes the instrumental ensemble for Mozart's G-Minor Piano Quartet. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. April 1 at 7:30 and April 4 at 4.)

Music and Satire—An evening of ironic or tongue-in-cheek works, comprising Aaron Jay Kernis's "The Four Seasons of Futurist Cuisine," Victoria Bond's "A Modest Proposal," and Augusta Read Thomas's "Angel Chant," performed by violinist Deborah Wong, cellist Michael Finkel, pianist Edmund Nieman, tenor Paul Sperry, and narrator Frank Longino. (Greenwich House Music School, 46 Barrow St. 242-4770. April 1 at 8.)

David Russell—The guitarist plays a sonata by Mauro Giuliani, suites by Jean Baptiste Loeillet and Federico Mompou, and Jorge Morel's Three Pieces. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. 749-2802, ext. 428. April 1 at 8.)

Yoko Takebe, Friends, and Family—The violinist, a member of the New York Philharmonic, is joined by numerous colleagues, including her husband (Philharmonic violist Michael Gilbert) and two children (violinist Jennifer Gilbert and violist Alan Gilbert, the latter also a conductor on the rise), in a concert that comprises Dvořák's String Quintet in E-Flat Major (Op. 97), Mozart's Horn Quintet, and Schoenberg's "Verklärte Nacht." (Weill Recital Hall. 247-7800. April 2 at 8.)

American Chamber Ensemble—Clarinettist Stanley Drucker assists the group in chamber works by Amy Beach, Copland, Carter, George Kleinsinger, Daniel Gregory Mason, Douglas Moore, and Gary Shocker. (Weill Recital Hall. 247-7800. April 4 at 2.)

Ariane Lallemand—Cellist, with pianist Ilan Rechtman, performing Beethoven's Sonata in A Major and Brahms's Sonata in E Minor. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. April 4 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

Italian Modern—Works written in the past decade by young Italian composers are performed by the ModernWorks! ensemble. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. April 5 at 7.)

Patricia Racette and Russell Braun—The soprano and the baritone, assisted by pianist Carolyn Maule, perform songs by Schumann, Wolf, and Finzi, among others. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center. April 5 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

Ikuyo Nakamichi—Pianist, performing Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata, Schumann's "Carnaval" and "Scènes Mignonnes sur Quatre Notes," Mendelssohn's "Variations Sérieuses," and works by Debussy and Takemitsu. (Weill Recital Hall. 247-7800. April 6 at 8.)

Da Capo Chamber Players—The modern-music group, with several guests, offers an evening of music and cinema, including premières of works by Carlos Carillo, Andrew Ford, and Eleanor Sandresky, a musical video work by Richard Carrick, and film scores by Martin Matalon and Hanns Eisler (which will be performed as accompaniment to screenings of excerpts from Buñuel's "Un Chien Andalou" and Joris Ivens's "Rain," respectively). (Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. 675-9629. April 6 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus—The Greatest Show on Earth, now in its hundred-and-twenty-ninth edition, adds a bunch of tricks to the expected roster of acrobats, lion tamers, elephants, and clowns. Female Russian gymnasts bounce on pogo sticks while holding flaming torches and cavorting with Brazilian martial artists. A Swedish equestrian team saddles up an ostrich. And the Urias family (father Victor and sons Erwin and Melvin) ride motorcycles inside the sixteen-foot steel "Globe of Death." (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Through April 11.)

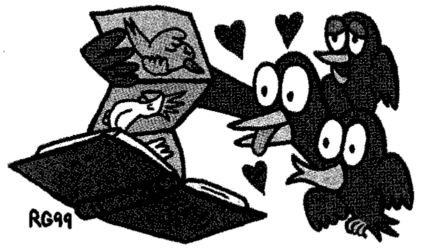
Readings—April 5 at 7:30: By writers Richard Howard, Jonathan Lear, Janet Malcom, and Mark Strand, from the works of Sigmund Freud, as well as their pick of poems and essays that bear his mark. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 399-3030.) . . . ¶ April 6 at 7: By poets Paul Muldoon and Charles Wright. (Russian Samovar, 256 W. 52nd St. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ April 7 at 6:30: By actors Mary Beth Hurt, Meryl Streep, and Cherry Jones, from the short stories of Katherine Anne Porter, William Trevor, and Gina Berriault. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.)

Talks—March 31 at 6: The architiect Samuel G. White, author of "The Houses of McKim, Mead, and White," discusses the venerable architecture firm. (National Academy Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. For reservations, which are required, call 369-4880.) . . . ¶ March 31 at 7:30: Photographer Bruce Davidson talks about his book "Brooklyn Gang." (Barnes and Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ April 7 at 6: Writers Art Buchwald and George Plimpton reminisce about living in Paris in the nineteen-fifties. (Mercantile Library, 17 E. 47th St. For reservations, which are required, call 755-6710.)

BOOK CURRENTS

For the Birds

At the beginning of Ann Harries' powerfully imagined historical novel, **Manly Pursuits** (Bloomsbury, April), the terminally ill empire builder Cecil Rhodes decides that only the sound of English songbirds transported to his Cape Town home can save him. Though the premise might seem far-fetched, David Attenborough's **The Life of Birds** (Princeton) confirms that colonialists indeed exported British birds to all corners of the empire to give "unmelodious hills and woods, the music and harmony of English country life"—often with a predictably catastrophic impact on indigenous species. Attenborough's thorough but accessible survey of the evolution and habits of birds is accompanied by dramatic photographs that highlight the stunning variety of the avian class. Nowadays, thanks to **Common Birds and Their Songs** (Houghton Mifflin), a photo-filled guide and CD by Lang Elliott and Marie Read, devotees of birdsong can hear the American goldfinch or white-breasted nuthatch throughout the world without disturbing foreign ecosystems in the slightest.



It's no surprise that many bird books emulate the gaudy beauty of their subject. The achievements of the most famous exponent of this genre, John James Audubon, have somewhat obscured the work of his excellent predecessor Mark Catesby, but a reprint of **Catesby's Birds of Colonial America** (University of North Carolina) is both beautiful in the simple accuracy of its drawings and historically interesting for its pictures and descriptions of species now extinct. These include the Carolina parakeet (its deep-green plumage was too tempting for nineteenth-century milliners) and the passenger pigeon, once the most populous bird in America.

The great literary birder Henry David Thoreau describes a pigeon trap in his diaries, remarking that the birds stay so still that they look like decoys. In **Thoreau on Birds** (Beacon), the writer records the patterns of flight, the shapes of wings, and the sounds of songs, before reflecting that when you come across an unknown species of bird it seems to sing "as freshly as if it had been the first morning of creation."

RODNEY ALAN GREENBLATT

Books.

[AT BARNES & NOBLE]

A Feast of Fiction

[From Random House]

TAKING LIVES

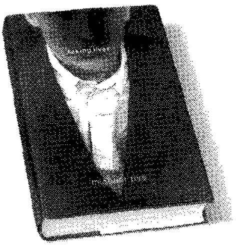
by Michael Pye

Tough as nails and superbly constructed, *Taking Lives* is a literary thriller Alfred Hitchcock would have loved. It's a daring psychological novel about a serial killer who takes on the identities of his victims. But when he takes the wrong life, his dangerous secret begins to unravel—as this chilling tale hurtles toward its shocking climax. (Knopf)

Pub. Price: $23.00

Discount **30%**

B&N Price: $16.10



LITTLE GREEN MEN

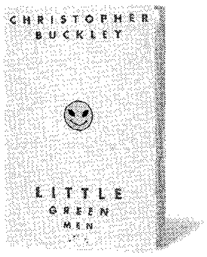
by Christopher Buckley

If Mark Twain had written an episode of *The X-Files* this might be the result—a politically incorrect comic novel that Joseph Heller calls "a delicious, ingenious treat." Perfect for anyone who has ever been abducted by aliens or visited Washington, D.C., *Little Green Men* proves once and for all that the truth is out there. *Way* out there. (Random House)

Pub. price: $24.95

Discount **30%**

B&N Price: $17.46



ELEMENTALS

Stories of Fire and Ice

by A.S. Byatt

Extremes and polarities are the focus of these consuming, compelling stories by A. S. Byatt, the bestselling author of *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*. A mesmerizing collection of short stories on the theme of opposition, *Elementals* burns with sensual and startling imagery. (Random House)

Pub. Price: $21.95

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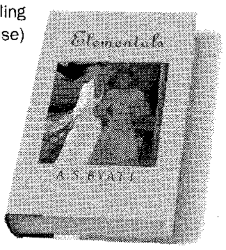
B&N Price: $15.36



GOD IS A BULLET

by Boston Teran

A fourteen-year-old girl is kidnapped by a satanic cult whose leader considers murder the "ultimate freedom, ultimate joy...ultimate service." The girl's father, a cop, teams with a former cult member on a chase through a savage subculture of drugs and violence—a hunt that takes them to the limit of physical and psychological torment. (Knopf)

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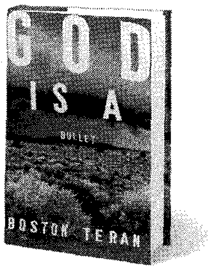

FOR THE RELIEF OF UNBEARABLE URGES

by Nathan Englander

A young talent with remarkable storytelling gifts, Englander debuts with a stunning collection of nine stories, all works of profound imagination. Deliriously comic tales like the title story are matched with more somber but equally striking pieces such as "The Twenty-Seventh Man." A selection of the Barnes & Noble *Discover Great New Writers* program. (Knopf)

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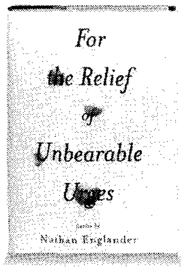

THE MARCHING SEASON

by Daniel Silva

Daniel Silva burst onto the scene with *The Unlikely Spy*, an auspicious thriller debut. Now, in his most suspenseful novel yet, a retired CIA officer is lured back to the Agency—and into a deadly contest of wits and deception. At risk: the fragile peace in Northern Ireland. But in fact, he's a pawn in a much larger game, pitting him against the world's most dangerous assassin. (Random House)

Pub. Price: $25.95

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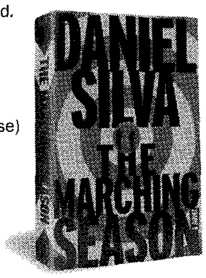

COME TOGETHER

by Emlyn Rees and Josie Lloyd

Two rising stars in London's literary scene explore a postmodern love affair in alternating he-said/she-said chapters—a sexy tale wrapped around the ultimate real-life twist, the authors' own relationship. The result is a contemporary romantic novel sure to make you laugh and cry and scream along with its two protagonists. (Villard)

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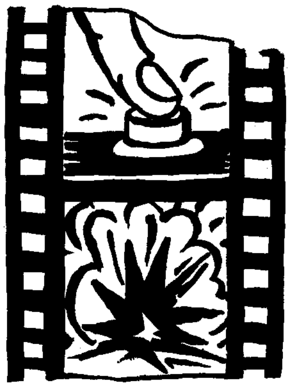
THE MOVIES



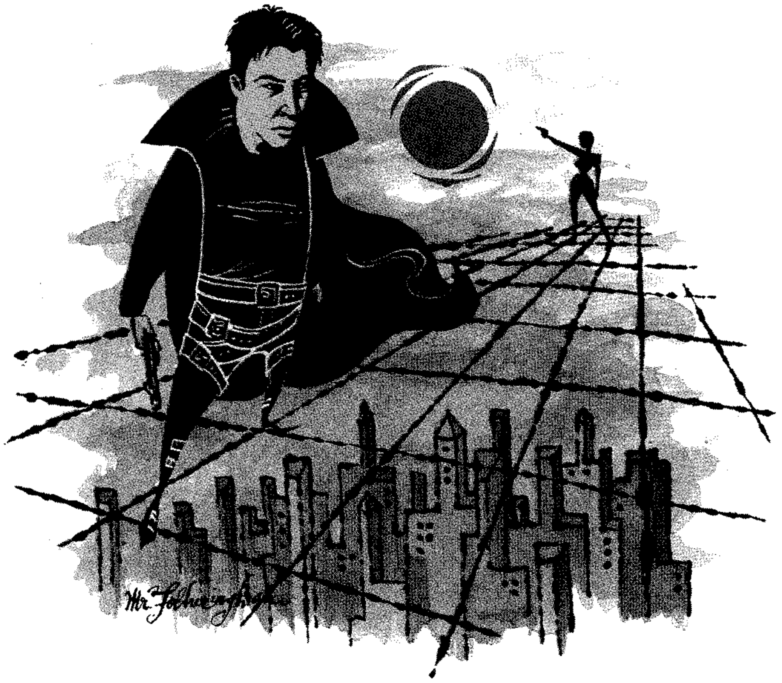
OPENING

Cookie's Fortune—Robert Altman's comedy of Southern manners, with Glenn Close, Julianne Moore, Liv Tyler, Chris O'Donnell, Charles S. Dutton, and Patricia Neal. Opening April 2. (Beekman and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The Dreamlife of Angels—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening April 2. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Following—Writer-director Christopher Nolan's story of a young man (Jeremy Theobald) who gets caught up in the life of one of the strangers he is following. Showing at the New Directors/New Films festival April 2 at 9 and April 3 at 1:30. Opening April 4. (Film Forum.)

The Matrix—A science-fiction thriller, starring Keanu Reeves, Laurence Fishburne, and Carrie-Anne Moss; directed by Andy and Larry Wachowski. Opening March 31. (Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)



Opening March 31, Keanu Reeves in Andy and Larry Wachowski's "The Matrix."

The Out-of-Towners—The misadventures of a Midwestern couple (Steve Martin and Goldie Hawn) in New York City, in this remake of the 1970 film. Directed by Sam Weisman. Opening April 2.

Paulina—A documentary about a Mexican maid who was abused as a child and who returns to her native village to confront her family and her memories. Directed by Vicky Funari. In Spanish. Opening April 2. (Cinema Village.)

10 Things I Hate About You—Gil Junger's comedy about sisters, dating, and popularity. Opening March 31. (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, Sutton, and Union Square.)

The Underground Orchestra—Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening March 31.

FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

Affliction—Nick Nolte, committing himself to a difficult part with a manly readiness that inspires affection, even awe, is Wade Whitehouse, a divorced policeman and hired hand floundering badly in a snowbound New Hampshire town. Both kindly and belligerent, Wade misses the meaning and rhythm of events, and reacts too much or too little, erupting in anger over what he should laugh off, ridiculing what he should take seriously. Writer-director Paul Schrader flinches at nothing and takes us deep into the texture and causes of this man's failure. With James Coburn as Wade's horrifying father, Willem Dafoe as his brother, Sissy Spacek as his girlfriend, and Mary Beth Hurt as his ex-wife. Schrader adapted Russell Banks's 1989 novel himself.—*David Denby* (1/11/99) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, 59th Street East Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

Analyze This—You can see the jokes coming well in advance, but you still laugh. Robert De Niro is the mafia boss who is having panic attacks at crucial moments, and Billy Crystal is the mild, bored little shrink who becomes his doctor and friend. What makes the film so effective is that the two men form a real bond—each fulfills some need in the other. Directed by Harold Ramis.—*D.D.* (Coronet Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Corruptor—A serviceable action film, directed by James Foley, that gets its spark from the pairing of its sexy leading men—soft-spoken, baby-faced Mark Wahlberg and quiet, graceful Hong Kong hunk Chow Yun-Fat. They're mismatched Chinatown cops (there's a lot of that going around) trying to vanquish evil and corruption at every turn of the well-worn crime-thriller plot. Foley is no John Woo, but he gets some fine performances from his leads and supporting players (particularly Ric Young as a gang leader and Brian Cox as Wahlberg's father, a disgraced ex-cop).—*Bruce Diones* (Cinema 3rd Avenue, 84th Street Sixplex, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VI.)

The Devil Doll (1936)—Creepy. Some bits are fairly certain to return in nightmares. Lionel Barrymore, a fugitive convict masquerading as an old lady, sells dolls to his enemies. The dolls are miniaturized people (Grace Ford and Arthur Hohl) who steal and kill. Tod Browning directed this adaptation of Abraham Merritt's novel "Burn, Witch, Burn!"—*Pauline Kael* (Walter Reade Theatre; April 4.)

EDtv—At a slipping cable channel, two rancidly intelligent executives (Rob Reiner and Ellen DeGeneres) hold a contest, choose an appealing but ordinary guy—one Ed Pekurny (Matthew McConaughey), a video-store clerk in San Francisco—and put him on the air, live, twenty-four hours a day. The whole world watches and gets involved in Ed's life, which quickly resembles a soap opera. On the surface, this rambunctious comedy, which was written by Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel, and directed by Ron Howard, is a satire of media ruthlessness and the public's hunger for instant fame. But it's so broadly conceived that it never achieves any distance from its subject. How can you put down the crass public and "expose" cynical TV executives when you're making a crude, populist, cynical movie? With Woody Harrelson as Ed's jerky older brother, Jenna Elfman as his girlfriend, Sally Kirkland and Martin Landau as his mother and stepfather, and a slinky, overheated Elizabeth Hurley as a model who throws herself at Ed.—*D.D.* (3/29/99) (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

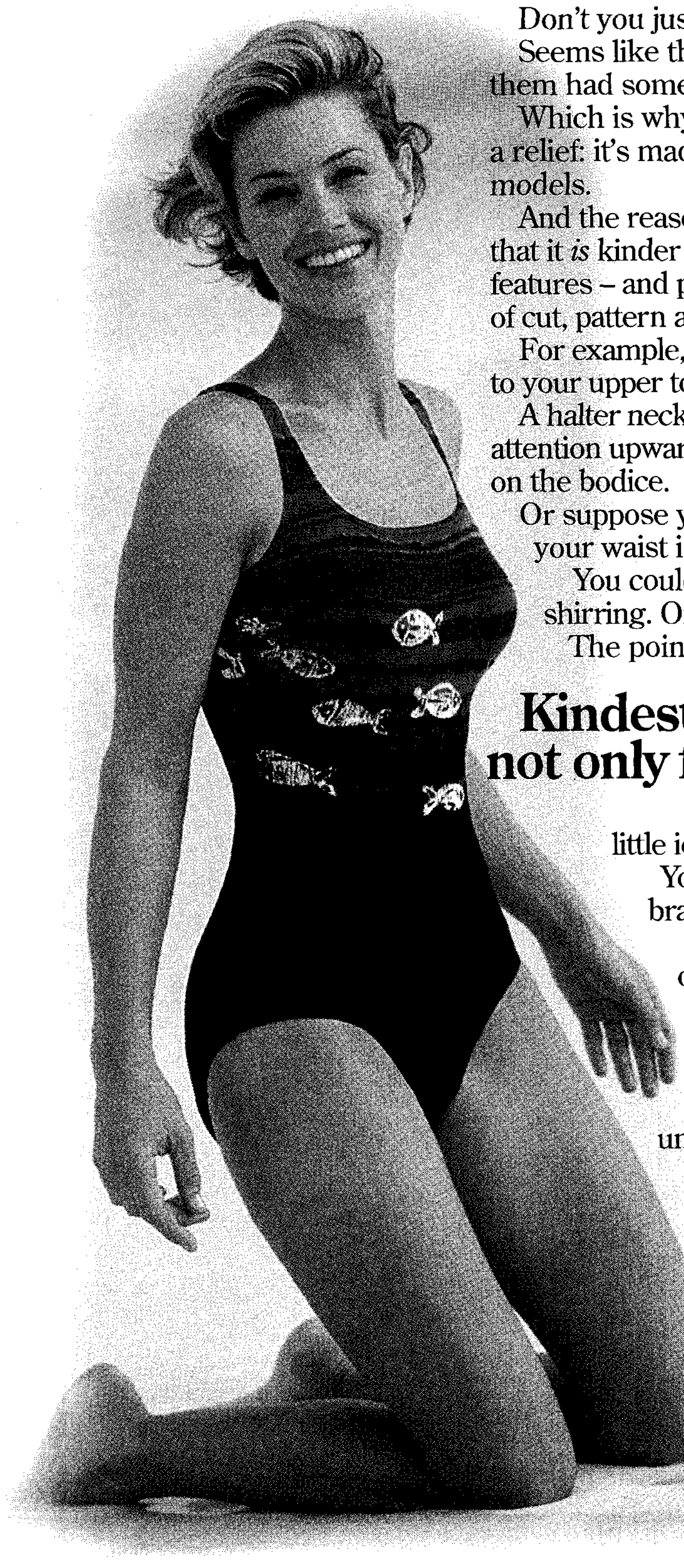
Elizabeth—A grisly, flamboyant account of the Virgin Queen's early days as a monarch. Screenwriter Michael Hirst alters and conflates events that took place over many years—by degrees, Elizabeth (Cate Blanchett), a Protestant surrounded by powerful Catholics, takes control of England by pulling off a kind of internal coup d'état. The means of her ascension is Sir Francis Walsingham (Geoffrey Rush), a perfect Machiavellian character who serves the Queen as adviser, deadly assassin, and spy. Elizabeth's climb to power, however, is a personal disaster: the supple-waisted maiden with long red hair becomes stiff and harsh, emerging from her youth white-faced and trapped in the armor of a thick brocade dress. The movie is a horror film masquerading as a historical pageant. Directed by Shekhar Kapur.—*D.D.* (11/16/98) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Union Square.)

Forces of Nature—A misfired attempt to jazz up Sandra Bullock's goody-goody image. Bullock plays a flaky sexpot flying to Savannah to visit the son she has neglected for years. Uptight Ben Affleck is travelling on the same plane to his wedding (to Maura Tierney, in the dull girl-next-door role that often goes to Bullock). Bullock is refreshingly natural, as usual, but Affleck seems uncomfortable as the romantic lead—if she's light as a feather, he's stiff as a board. Marc Lawrence's implausible script and Bronwen Hughes's tin-ear direction do nothing to improve matters.—*Sarah Kerr* (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, and Union Square.)

The Harmonists—The true story of the Comedian Harmonists, the legendary German singing group that was forced to disband in 1934 as the Nazis came to power (because some of their members were Jewish). The

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

Does every swimsuit you try on look like it's designed for somebody else?



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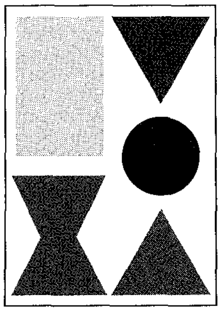

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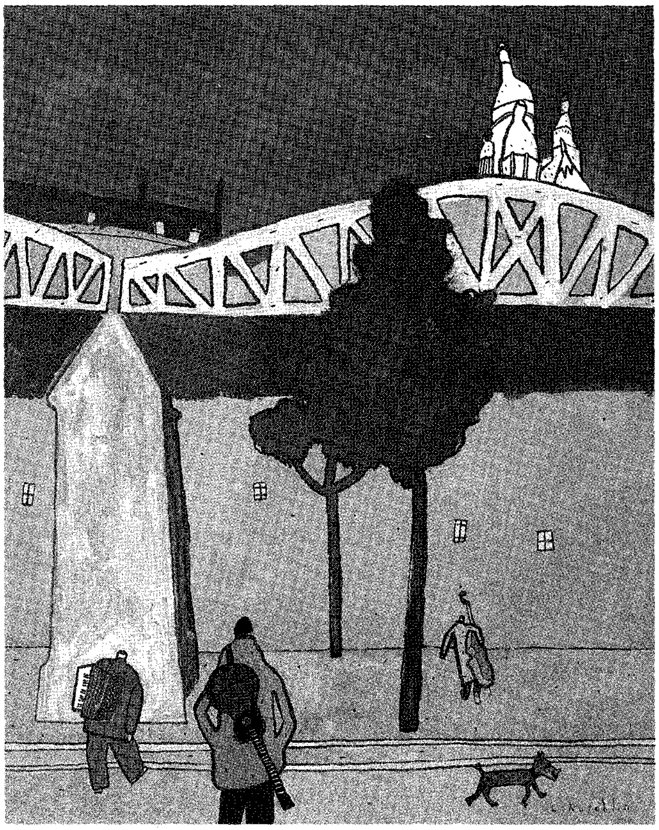
film, directed in rich Technicolor by Joseph Vilsmaier, features the original musical performances (ably lip-synched by the actors), digitally remastered to highlight the group's sophisticated harmonies. The offstage story involves romantic conflicts, Nazi sympathizers, and leadership struggles within the group; these subplots give the picture an emotional core that raises it above what could have been simply a music-hall experience. It has all the verve and inspiration of the Harmonists themselves. In German.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Life Is Beautiful—Would that it were. The great, donkey-faced Italian clown Roberto Benigni attempts an ambitious fable of comedy's redemptive power. He plays an Italian Jew who keeps alive his little boy's innocence in a Nazi concentration camp by pretending that the routines of the camp are no more than an intricate game staged for his son's benefit. But Benigni's ironic counter-reality undermines this movie, not the Nazis, who were beyond ridicule for the same reason that they were beyond rationality. Totalitarianism makes the fantastic literal—that is its demonic appeal. Benigni's jokes and games just aren't enough, and you leave the movie thinking that what's touching is not Benigni's ministrations to the little boy but his own need to believe in comedy as salvation. With Giorgio Cantarini as the son, who has the heartbreaking quality of the children in the old neorealist movies. In Italian.—*D.D.* (11/16/98 and 3/15/99) (Angelika Film Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Paris, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and 72nd Street East.)

Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels—This début film from Guy Ritchie, a young English writer and director, was a big hit in Britain, though it's hard to see why. Four London lads owe half a million pounds to a man with the subtle sobriquet of Hatchet Harry. Learning of an upcoming drug theft, they lie in wait and rob the robbers; all goes well until their fence, Nick the Greek (Stephen Marcus), unwittingly tries to sell the drugs back to the very person who owned them in the first place. It's a neat twist in a nicely wrapped plot; if only the rest of this flimsy film lived up to it.—*Anthony Lane* (3/8/99) (BAM Rose Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

The School of Flesh—For his new movie, Benoît Jacquot, best known for "A Single Girl," has set a Yukio Mishima novel in present-day Paris. The transplant is all too successful; the whole thing feels French to its fingertips. French cinema has long thrived on the romantic mismatch, and in this case it's Older Woman meets Younger Man; to be precise, we get the uptight businesswoman (Isabelle Huppert) letting her hair down for the sake of a poor bartender (Vincent Martinez), who has a colorful sexual record and no morals to speak of. If this were a Hollywood production, the hustling youth would find true love in return; the strength of Jacquot's take on the affair is that he is prepared to show his lovers not changing, or skirting change and then pulling back in fear. Only in bed do the two leads understand each other, and sometimes not even there. Word has it that French viewers thought there was too little sex in the movie; American viewers may think there's too much. *Vive la différence.* In French.—*A.L.* (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)



Opening March 31, "The Underground Orchestra."

Shakespeare in Love—A ripely emotional comedy-fantasia—concocted by director John Madden and screenwriters Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard—of how Shakespeare came to write "Romeo and Juliet." In 1593, young Will (Joseph Fiennes), a stud with liquid eyes and full lips, is just an unhappy and unproductive hack, jealous of the greater Christopher Marlowe (Rupert Everett). At first the movie comes at us too broadly, with many facetiously anachronistic jokes about the grubby professional routines of the theatre. But Will falls in love with the fictional heiress Viola de Lesseps (Gwyneth Paltrow), and when these two poeticizing lovers climb into bed, and Shakespeare's quill begins to fly, the cleverness catches fire and "Shakespeare in Love" turns into an exciting literary-erotic entertainment. With Geoffrey Rush as the theatre manager Henslowe and Judi Dench as a supremely intelligent and wittily dominating Queen Elizabeth.—*D.D.* (12/21/98) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, Cinema II, Lincoln Square, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Ziegfeld.)

Sweethearts (1938)—One of the liveliest of the Jeanette MacDonald–Nelson Eddy musicals. They are husband-and-wife operetta stars, trading lovey-dovey lines that were given an edge by the writers, Dorothy Parker and Alan Campbell. This was M-G-M's first three-color-process Technicolor feature, and it has startling color costuming by Adrian. Directed by W. S. Van Dyke.—*P.K.* (Walter Reade Theatre; April 4.)

A Taste of Honey (1961)—When blowsy Helen (Dora Bryan) says she never knew that her misfit daughter Jo (Rita Tushingham) was talented, Jo retorts, "I'm not just talented, I'm geniused." There *is* a touch of genius to Shelagh Delaney's comedy-drama, set in Manchester, England, about Jo's inchoate yearnings, her brief interracial romance, and the safe zone she creates with her only friend, a tender gay man (Murray Melvin). Jo is a flighty character with a bitter earthy streak, and her conflicting energies—expressed in sometimes edgy, sometimes fanciful dialogue—make this a near-classic of postadolescent confusion and longing. The director, Tony Richardson (who co-wrote the screenplay with Delaney), didn't find a visual style to match the verve of Delaney's language, but he cast the film superbly, and in the best scenes Walter Lassally's photography and John Addison's score help him achieve the perfect blend of poignancy and insouciance.—*Michael Sragow* (A Different Light Bookstore; April 4.)

True Crime—Clint Eastwood's face has hardened into chiselled rock, his strong torso is now wrinkled, his voice is hoarse and bodiless. Yet at sixty-eight, Eastwood is a more forceful actor than he was twenty years ago—less opaque, less stylized, and altogether more idiosyncratic. He's too old and unsuited by temperament to play the tough city newspaper reporter in this film, but he still has an authority that few younger actors could match. The reporter, an ex-alcoholic, is selfish and faithless in many ways; he's given up on everything but the truth, and he sets about investigating the case of a convicted murderer (Isaiah Washington) on the day the man is set to be executed at San Quentin. The ending of the movie—in which the reporter drives madly to the governor's mansion as the execution commences—is an outrageous manipulation of the audience, but the rest of this melodrama, which Eastwood directed himself (Larry Gross, Paul Brickman, and Stephen Schiff adapted Andrew Klavan's novel), is enjoyably lowdown and melancholy. Shot in Oakland. With James Woods, Denis Leary, Diane Venora, and Lisa Gay Hamilton.—*D.D.* (3/29/99) (Criterion Center, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Underground Orchestra—The Dutch filmmaker Heddy Honigmann trains her camera on the street and subway performers of Paris to find the poignant tales that lurk behind their tunes. It's a society of nomads in exile: a gentle army deserter from Sarajevo who plays a mean violin, a singer-songwriter who survived Mobutu's concentration camps in Zaire, a much tortured Argentine pianist whose fingers came within millimeters of his military captors' electric saw. Most of the musicians encountered remain largely anonymous, but several invite the viewer into their homes and their quirky private lives. Music is more than a profession for this ragtag band: it's a lifeline, and the film accords it the respect it deserves, allowing pieces to play out in long, uninterrupted stretches. In French and Spanish. —*James M. Keller* (Film Forum.)

ALSO PLAYING

Among Giants: Union Square. . . . **Central Station** (reviewed in our issue of 11/30/98): BAM Rose Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema. . . . **Children of Heaven** (2/15/99): Angelika Film Center. . . . **Cruel Intentions:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square. . . . **The Deep End of the Ocean:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, and 64th and 2nd. . . . **Doug's 1st Movie:** Chelsea West, Guild, Lincoln Square, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **8mm** (3/8/99): 84th Street Sixplex, State, and Union Square. . . . **Enemy of the State:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **Gods and Monsters** (11/9/98): 59th Street East Cinema, Quad Cinema,

LIONEL KOECHLIN

62nd & Broadway, and 34th Street Showplace. . . . **HANDS ON A HARD BODY:** Village East Cinemas. . . . **HARD:** Cinema Village. . . . **HILARY AND JACKIE** (1/18/99): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Union Square. . . . **THE HOLE:** Cinema Village. . . . **THE KING AND I:** Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, State, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE LAST DAYS:** Quad Cinema. . . . **THE MOD SQUAD:** 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 19th Street East 6, State, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **PATCH ADAMS** (1/25/99): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **PRINCE OF EGYPT:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE RAGE: CARRIE 2:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Orpheum VII, and Union Square. . . . **RELAX . . . IT'S JUST SEX:** Quad Cinema. . . . **RUSHMORE** (12/7-14/98): Art Greenwich Twin, Lincoln Square, and Union Square. . . . **SAVING PRIVATE RYAN** (8/3/98): Beekman, Union Square, and Waverly. . . . **A SIMPLE PLAN:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE STICKY FINGERS OF TIME:** The Screening Room. . . . **TANGO:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THE THIN RED LINE** (12/28/98 & 1/4/99): First & 62nd Cinemas and Union Square. . . . **20 DATES:** Union Square. . . . **WAKING NED DEVINE:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **A WALK ON THE MOON:** Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Square, and Union Square. . . . **YOU'VE GOT MAIL** (12/28/98 & 1/4/99): Worldwide Cinemas.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

NEW DIRECTORS/NEW FILMS—A festival of international films. March 31 at 6: "Passion" (György Fehér; Hungary). . . . March 31 at 9:15: "Like Father Like Son" (Christophe Restiau and Johan Roger; France) and "Open Bodies" (Sébastien Lifshitz; France). . . . April 1 at 6 and April 3 at 3:30: "Thrane's Method" (Unni Straume; Norway). . . . April 1 at 8:30 and April 4 at 12:30: "The Wounds" (Srdjan Dragojevic; Yugoslavia and France). . . . April 2 at 6 and 6:30 and April 4 at 3:30: "Orphans" (Peter Mullan; United Kingdom). . . . April 2 at 9 and April 3 at 1:30: "Following" (Christopher Nolan; United Kingdom). . . . April 3 at 6 and April 5 at 8:30: "Barrio" (Fernando León de Aranoa; Spain). . . . April 3 at 9 and April 5 at 6: "Tokyo Eyes" (Jean-Pierre Limosin; France and Japan). . . . April 4 at 6 and April 6 at 8:30: "Dribbling Fate" (Fernando Vendrell; Portugal and Cape Verde). . . . April 4 at 8:30 and April 6 at 6: "Buttoners" (Petr Zelenka; Czech Republic). (Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. For information, call 708-9500.)

FILM FORUM 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through April 8: "Days of Heaven" (1978; Terrence Malick).

WALTER READE THEATRE, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A program of films starring Jeanette MacDonald. March 31 at 2 and 6:15: "Love Me Tonight" (1932, Rouben Mamoulian). . . . March 31 at 4:10 and 8:30: "I Married an Angel" (1942, W. S. Van Dyke). . . . April 1 at 2 and 6:15: "The Merry Widow" (1934, Ernst Lubitsch). . . . April 1 at 4 and 8:15: "Naughty Marietta" (1935, Van Dyke). . . . April 2 at 2 and 6:45: "The Firefly" (1937, Robert Z. Leonard). . . . April 2 at 4:30 and 9:30: "San Francisco" (1936, Van Dyke). . . . April 3 at 4 and 8:30: "One Hour with You" (1932, Lubitsch). . . . April 3 at 6: "Maytime" (1937, Leonard). . . . April 4 at 4 and 8:45: "Smilin' Through" (1941, Frank Borzage). . . . April 4 at 6:15: "Sweethearts" (†). . . . April 6 at 2 and 6:15: "Monte Carlo" (1930, Lubitsch). . . . April 6 at 4 and 8:10: "The Love Parade" (1929, Lubitsch). . . . ¶ April 4 at 2: "The Devil Doll" (†).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films featuring Edward G. Robinson. April 1 at 2: "The Ten Commandments" (1956, Cecil B. De Mille). . . . April 2 at 2:30: "Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet" (1940, William Dieterle). . . . April 5 at 2:30: "The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse" (1938, Anatole Litvak). . . . April 6 at 2:30: "House of Strangers" (1949, Joseph L. Mankiewicz).

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—April 3-4 at 2 and 5: "Ali, the Fighter" (1971, William Greaves).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—April 6 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "La Séparation" (1994, Christian Vincent; in French).

A DIFFERENT LIGHT BOOKSTORE, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On April 4 at 7, the feature will be "A Taste of Honey" (†).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—A program of films directed by Jim Jarmusch. April 1 at 7:30 and 9:30 and April 4 at 8:30: "Permanent Vacation" (1984). . . . April 2 at 8 and 10, April 3 at 8:15, and April 4 at 6:15: "Stranger Than Paradise" (1984). . . . April 3 at 6 and 10:15 and April 4 at 4: "Down by Law" (1986).

JAPAN SOCIETY, 333 E. 47th St. (752-3015)—A retrospective of films by Tai Kato; in Japanese, with English subtitles. April 2 at 6:30: "The Record of Winds and Clouds of the Sanada Clan" (1963).

SYMPHONY SPACE, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—A program of films featuring Marcello Mastroianni. April 6 at 7: "Don't Touch the White Woman" (1974, Marco Ferreri; in Italian). . . . April 6 at 9: "La Grande Bouffe" (1973, Ferreri; in Italian).

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

ANGELIKA FILM CENTER, 18 W. Houston St.
ART GREENWICH TWIN, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
ASTOR PLAZA, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM ROSE CINEMAS, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
BEEKMAN, Second Ave. at 66th St.
CHELSEA CINEMAS, 260 W. 23rd St.
CHELSEA WEST, 333 W. 23rd St.
CINEMA I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA 3RD AVENUE, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA VILLAGE, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
CORONET CINEMAS, Third Ave. at 59th St.
CRITERION CENTER, Broadway at 44th St.
EAST 85TH STREET, First Ave. at 85th St.
EASTSIDE PLAYHOUSE, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84TH STREET SIXPLEX, Broadway at 84th St.
86TH STREET EAST TWIN, Third Ave. at 86th St.
59TH STREET EAST CINEMA, 239 E. 59th St.
FILM FORUM, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
FIRST & 62ND CINEMAS, 400 E. 62nd St.
GOTHAM CINEMA, Third Ave. at 58th St.
GUILD, 33 W. 50th St.
LINCOLN PLAZA CINEMAS, Broadway at 63rd St.
LINCOLN SQUARE, Broadway at 68th St.
METRO CINEMA I AND 2, Broadway at 99th St.
MURRAY HILL CINEMAS, 160 E. 34th St.
NEW YORK TWIN, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19TH STREET EAST 6, Broadway at 19th St.
OLYMPIA I AND II, Broadway at 107th St.
ORPHEUM VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
PARIS, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
PARK & 86TH STREET CINEMAS, 125 E. 86th St.
QUAD CINEMA, 34 W. 13th St.
THE SCREENING ROOM, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62ND & BROADWAY, 62 W. 62nd St.
64TH AND 2ND, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72ND STREET EAST, Third Ave. at 71st St.
STATE, Broadway at 45th St.
SUTTON I AND 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34TH STREET SHOWPLACE, 238 E. 34th St.
UNION SQUARE, Broadway at 13th St.
VILLAGE EAST CINEMAS, Second Ave. at 12th St.
VILLAGE THEATRE VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
WAVERLY I AND 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
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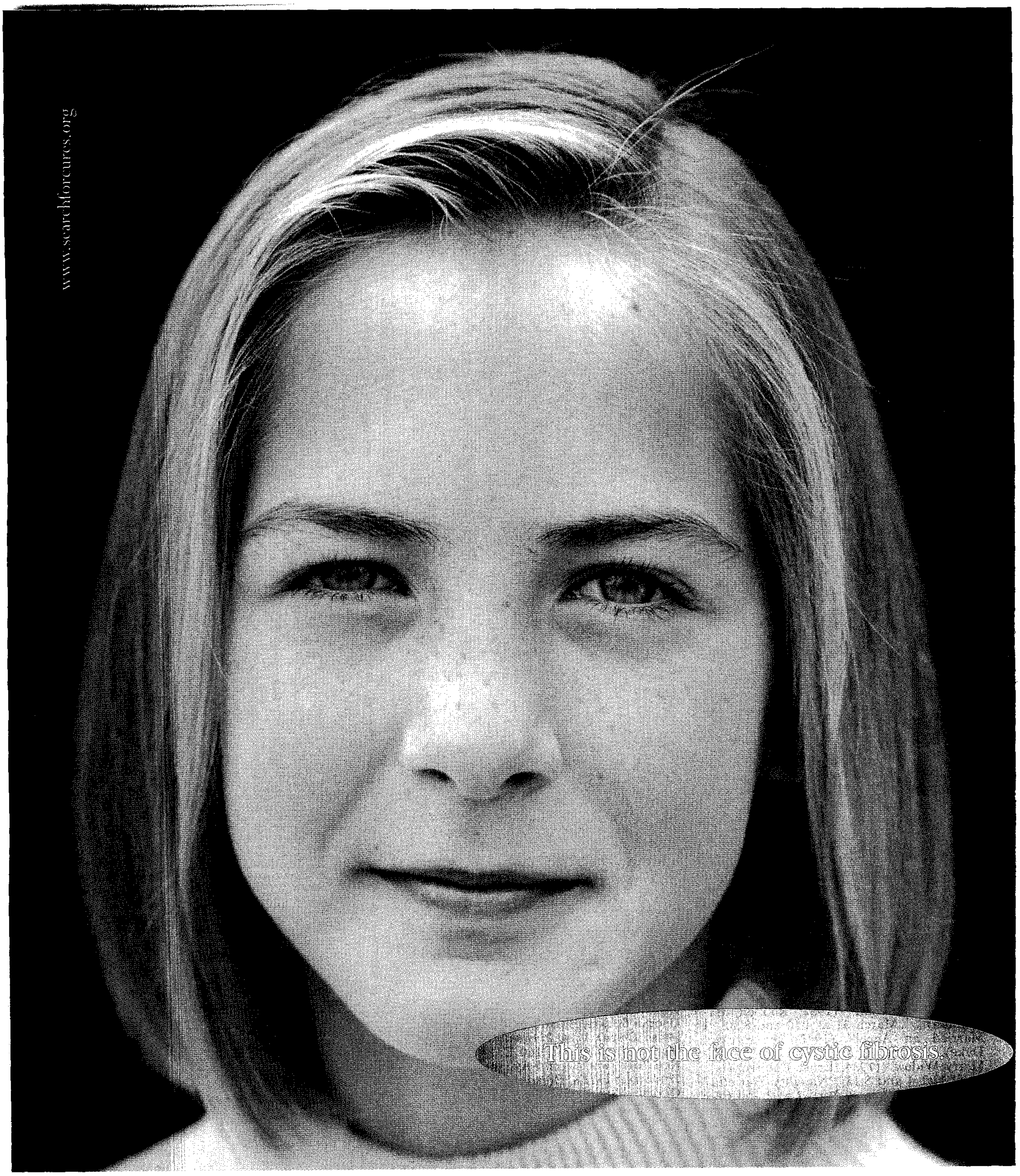
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THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

"Never Again"? For real?

INTERVIEWED on NPR the morning after NATO launched its bombing campaign over Yugoslavia, Ralph Peters, a retired Army officer turned military analyst, seemed to bridle at the suggestion that Slobodan Milosevic's onslaught in Kosovo, no matter how cruel, still amounted to an exclusively internal Yugoslav affair—one in which the outside world could claim no vital, or even legitimate, interest. That, Peters said, would be "the equivalent of arguing that Hitler would have been O.K. if he'd only killed German Jews."

Peters was one of many commentators planting themselves on one side or the other of the "Is this crisis more like the Second World War or more like Vietnam?" debate. Have we just avoided Munich, 1938, or, rather, blundered into the Gulf of Tonkin, 1964? The two sides of the question—both implicitly barbed with the imperative "Never Again!"—tend to be treated as if they were polar opposites. Historically, of course, they have always been intertwined. Congressional approval of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution played itself out in the long shadow of Munich (we weren't going to make *that* mistake again), while the appeasers of Munich were animated by their own Tonkin-like spectre, which is to say Sarajevo, 1914 (*they* weren't going to get drawn back into those pestilential trenches). And so on, back and forth, into the past: after all, the hair-trigger mobilizations of 1914 occurred in their own context of supposedly absolute lessons historically acquired.

An odd feature of the current state of the question is how fractured its two poles have themselves become. When people invoke Munich, they don't always have the same Never Again in mind. Some (such as Peters) seem to mean: Never Again should we stand by, paralyzed and indifferent, as genocide gets under way. Others have absorbed a somewhat different lesson: Never Again will we cave in before the threats of a bully, because doing so only makes it harder and costlier to deal with him later on. Still others infer that Never Again can we Americans allow ourselves the luxury of curling up into an isolationist ball.

Vietnam, too, tends to get invoked in a splintering of cross-readings: Never Again should we allow ourselves to be drawn into someone else's quagmire of a civil war. Never Again should we rain horrific, high-tech devastation upon a poor, almost defenseless people. Never Again should politicians be allowed to commit American troops to a mission without a clearly defined goal and a plausible endgame, or without having first secured the near-unanimous consent of the American people. And so forth.

Although the Holocaust and Vietnam rubrics have perhaps become so stretched and tattered as to have outlived their usefulness, Peters may have been pointing toward another, more pertinent way of thinking. For in 1938 there may not have been any established basis in international law for holding Hitler—a recognized head of state—to account over the annihilation of "his own" Jews, let alone a basis for mandating any sort of preventive intervention. Here, thankfully, things have changed. By the early fifties, in the wake of the Nuremberg Trials and the Genocide Convention, extermination on the basis of race, ethnicity, or religion had been universally delegitimatized, wherever it occurred and whoever undertook it.

The British jurist and legal theorist Sir Hersch Lauterpacht, a veteran of Nuremberg, used to note that if international law might be said to exist at the farthest reaches of conventional law, then the law of war existed at the farthest reaches of international law. Whatever else the remarkable week just past may have wrought or betokened, it has seen some remarkable activity out

Off-Hour Waiting Area

ILLUSTRATION BY LAURENT CILLUFFO

there along the infinite borderland. In an unprecedented move, NATO asserted the right, and even the duty, to intervene militarily against the government of a sovereign nonmember country so as to forestall a campaign of internal oppression. And on the very same day Britain's Law Lords rejected Augusto Pinochet's blanket claims of immunity from prosecution or from extradition to Spain for crimes committed while he was Chile's internationally recognized chief of state.

General Pinochet's lawyers had insisted that the simple fact of his position as a former head of state shielded him from prosecution. It was specifically that assertion which the Law Lords tossed aside. Their ruling confined itself to an almost ludicrously legalistic horizon, stating that Pinochet could be charged only with the specific crime of torture (not murder or disappearances)—and only with those instances that occurred after December 8, 1988, by which time Chile, Spain, and Britain had all adopted the international Convention Against Torture. Nevertheless, to deny Pinochet immunity as a chief of state was in itself an enormous breakthrough, just as NATO's actions signalled a new way of dealing with large-scale internal state violence. Forget those old analogies; we may be on the verge of a truly new millennium.

—LAWRENCE WESCHLER

DEPT. OF CONSEQUENCES

The schoolyard slight that brought down the Presidency.

Matt Spalding is abashed to admit that he doesn't remember Monica Lewinsky, even though they were contemporaries at the John Thomas Dye elementary school, in Bel Air. Monica remembers Matt, though, as a passage in "Monica's Story" makes clear: "She was dubbed 'Big Mac' by one of her classmates, Matthew Spaulding [sic], a gibe made all the more painful because at the time she was harboring a schoolgirl crush on him," Andrew Morton writes, adding that this was an instance of "the casual cattiness and cliquishness of children . . . which often remain as a canker in the psyche well into adult life."

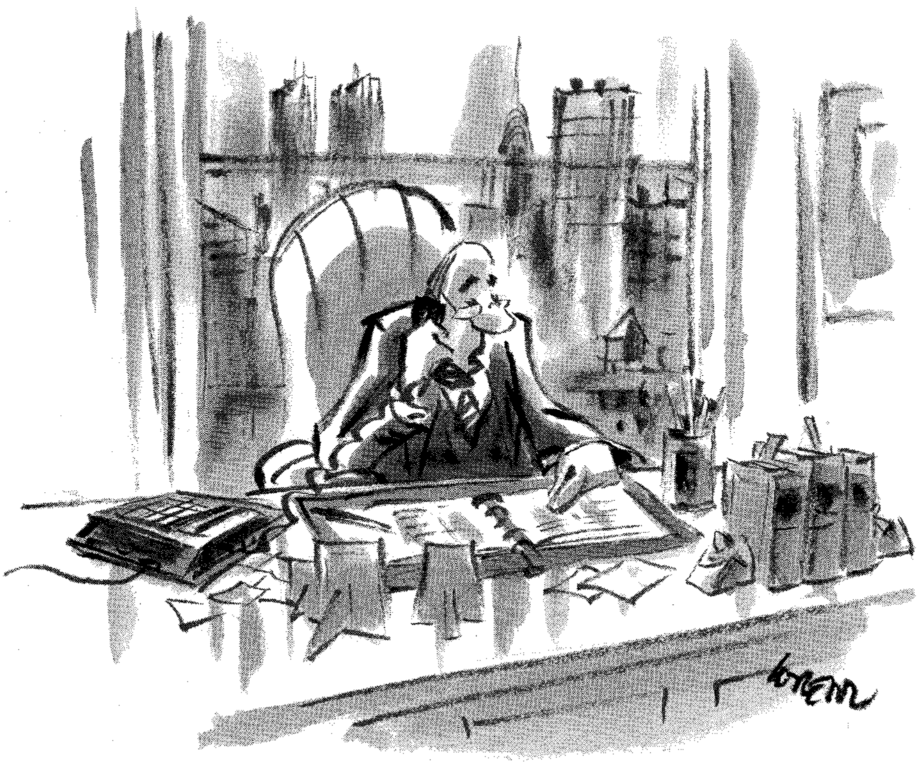
"For me it is this almost Orwellian experience," Spalding said the other day. He was speaking from Harvard's Graduate School of Education, where he is training to be a teacher. "I don't remember Monica, and I don't remember this whole Big Mac scenario," he went on. "It's almost like having my whole history reconstructed for me, and trying to go back and piece together the facts. The void of my memory has turned into something very real, and caused me to re-reflect on who I am now."

Spalding, an earnest young man who plans to teach high-school English and social studies, doesn't dispute the contention that he delivered the cutting comment, even if he doesn't remember doing so. "My first reaction was that I felt really terrible," he said. "That I had been this malicious kid who had given her this nickname that had stuck with her and caused her all this grief." (His second reaction was to wonder why Morton had not called him to check the story or, at least, the spelling of his name.) "I feel like, gosh, I planted this painful seed in somebody, and I feel bad about that," he continued. "Meanwhile, my friends are saying this is the butterfly in Japan that caused the hurricane in Alaska."

Though Spalding is remorseful, he is not ready to take responsibility for the constitutional crisis that resulted from Monica's long-standing, canker-in-the-psyche-driven craving for attention and approval. "I wouldn't be so presumptuous as to give myself that kind of sway over things," he said, sensibly. But, while he feels no obligation to apologize to the nation, Spalding would like to make amends to Monica. "I would like to apologize to her, and I plan on writing her a letter," he said.

Friends have told Spalding that he should be outraged at being named in the book, but he remains more concerned about Monica's emotional well-being than about his own reputation. In fact, Spalding sounds like just the kind of sensitive and concerned fellow that a girl such as Monica ought to be eager to date, instead of running after married men and leaders of the free world. What if the call to apologize re-ignited her schoolgirl crush?

"I guess it would be a long-distance telephone thing," Spalding answered warily. "Gosh," he said, sighing. "I don't think I would encourage it to go in that direction." —REBECCA MEAD



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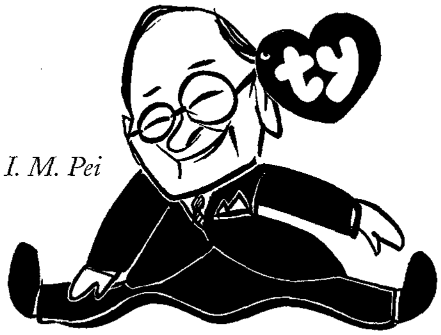
THE CULTURE INDUSTRY

Beanie Babies take East Fifty-seventh Street.

IN 1960, Time Inc. moved into a brand-new Sixth Avenue high-rise that was big and white and square. In the early eighties, during the twilight of A.T.&T.'s monopolistic imperium, the company put up its Darth Vader-ish headquarters on Madison. Donald Trump is famous for flashy casinos in New Jersey and shiny, shiny skyscrapers in Manhattan. In other words, when well-known companies associate themselves with prominent buildings, the architecture usually makes some kind of expressive sense.



I. M. Pei

But not always. A couple of weeks ago, Ty Warner, the founder and owner of Ty, Inc., bought the six-year-old Four Seasons Hotel, on East Fifty-seventh Street, for two hundred and seventy-five million dollars. Ty Warner's fortune is the Beanie Babies fortune, which he has been amassing just since 1993. Beanie Babies (for readers who have neither grade-school children nor talc-scented, overcaffeinated great-aunts) are the two hundred and twenty-five different bean-bag animals at the center of the longest-lasting and most lucrative plush-toy mania ever.

The only quality that Ty and the Four Seasons seem to share is a nine-figure net worth. The distinguishing feature of Beanie Babies (aside from the heart-shaped tags, which collectors fetishize) is their small size; Teeny Beanies, which come free with some McDonald's Happy Meals, are even smaller. The Four Seasons, on the other hand, is the tallest hotel in New York, and vastness is the overriding characteristic of its lobby and guest rooms.

Beanies are the apotheosis of mass-market cuteness—little and soft and preternaturally colorful critters, each with its own birthday and adorable name. Nothing about the Four Seasons is cute. The hotel is neoclassical, hard and handsome, tasteful but almost ferociously grand, clad inside and out in French limestone—"the same stone," the hotel's architect, I. M. Pei, says, "that I used at the Louvre."

Beanies are inexpensive—about five dollars apiece. The Four Seasons is probably the most expensive hotel in Manhattan. An ordinary room goes for six hundred dollars a night. And, just as patrons of the Four Seasons are not generally the kind of people who spend a lot of time clicking around Beanie Web sites, a Beanie devotee would have to be nuts to spend sixteen dollars for a Martini at the hotel bar when, for the same money, he could buy Mystic the unicorn, Canyon the cougar, and Nibbler the rabbit.

Ty Warner and Ty, Inc., have an obsession with privacy. Warner generally gives interviews only to Beanie Baby fanzines; the address and the phone number of his headquarters, in a Chicago exurb called Westmont, are unpublished; no one from Ty, Inc., including the woman in charge of public relations, would return my phone calls. The Four Seasons, packed with people who yearn to be interviewed, is on Fifty-seventh Street between Madison and Park Avenues, pretty much ground zero for both media engagement and see-and-be-seen spectacle.

Still, the modern impulse toward corporate synergy could just begin to bridge this cultural chasm. Until last week, I. M. Pei, whose offices are right down the block from the Four Seasons, hadn't heard that his hotel had fallen into the hands of the genius behind Beanie Babies. Asked about the new owners, he said, "I've never met them, and they've not paid me any visit." He suggested that, since the hotel will still be managed by the Four Seasons Corporation, the Beanie connection might go unrealized. "I guess they'll keep it nice," he said. "My guess is they will. Since the room rates are so high." When I bruited the cross-promotional prospects of Smoochy the frog and Patti the platypus for sale in the lobby, or a complimentary Beanie Baby on each guest's pillow at night, the architect was quiet. Then he said, "I hope not."

—KURT ANDERSEN

TABLE TALK

Confessions of a rogue waiter.

ON a good day, Chris Fehlinger can get an otherwise sensible person to order the head of a goat. "It's a game," he says. "You decide what you want a table to have before they have it." It was while Fehlinger was waiting tables at Babbo, a fashionable new Italian restaurant in the Village, that he unloaded the goat's head. He sold it to a table of food writers. "They asked if there was anything they *had* to have tonight, and I said, 'The goat. All we have left is the head, but it's the best part.' "

In New York, diners have to work hard to get a meal at a good restaurant. They'll call a month ahead in order to secure a table. Then, when they arrive, chances are they'll get a cool reception from the maître d', and be made to wait before being shown to a table. At that point, the waiter takes over, and when he is as shrewd and manipulative as Chris Fehlinger the diner doesn't have a chance.

The danger is no longer immediate, however. Mario Batali, Babbo's chef-owner, fired Fehlinger a couple of months ago, because, as both parties agree, he was a bit too much of a know-it-all. "But we miss him," Batali says. "He was the Zen master of all salesmen. He could sell wine to people who don't drink." These days, Fehlinger, a compact thirty-year-old with short, prickly blond hair and an art-history degree from Duke University, is launching both an on-line magazine about food and a Web site called bitterwaitress.com. For the Web site—a gossip sheet about restaurants and their celebrity chefs and patrons—he has lined up waiters from such restaurants as Union Square Café and Gotham Bar and Grill (both former employers of Fehlinger's) to file reports on who tips badly, who made a scene in public, and so on. "There is a waiter's art of overhearing conversations," he says. "I learned every-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

thing I know about publishing at Union Square Café."

Fehlinger loves to tell war stories. "Sometimes, at Babbo, we'd have a five- or seven-pound fish, a *huge* fish, and it was always fun to get a party of three people to eat a seven-pound fish," he recalled the other day. "They would!" He also enjoyed talking customers into ordering an "all-organ-meat tasting menu that I came up with, just because I was bored one day." He went on, "For fifty-nine dollars, it started with tripe and tongue, and went on to calf's-brain ravioli, goose-liver ravioli, and then sweetbreads."

Good waiters learn how to "read" people. If customers respond to basic suggestions, Fehlinger explained—if, for example, they seem interested in cocktail recommendations—you know they are good potential guinea pigs. "A lot of times when people asked about the menu, I would make it sound *so* elaborate that they would just leave it up to me," he said. "I'd describe, like, three dishes in excruciating detail, and they would just stutter, 'I, I, I can't decide, you decide for me.' So, in that case, if the kitchen wants to sell fish, you're gonna have fish." He also employed what might be called a "magic words" strategy: "All you have to do is throw out certain terms, like *guanciale*, and then you throw in something like *saba*, a reduction of the unfermented must of the Trebbiano grape. If you mention things like that, people are just, like, 'O.K.!'"

It also pays to make customers believe that you are on their side. "If people are asking you which of two dishes is better, and you say, 'Oh, my God, don't get that!,' then, suddenly, you've won their trust," Fehlinger said. "So, when it comes to wine, they find themselves spending twenty dollars more than they'd planned to."

Fehlinger grew up in the mountains of eastern Pennsylvania, and he describes himself as "basically white trash." That's probably why his greatest satisfaction has always come from serving peasant food to rich people. "People paying nine dollars for a plate of headcheese—I love it!" he said. "It's like the most desperate poverty food ever. After every part of the pig is butchered—the brain is gone, the snout has been made into dog food—the head is thrown into a pot of boiling water. The meat and fat from the skull rise to the top and are stuffed into a casing. It's disgusting, but it tastes good." He went on, "People would ask about it, and I would tell them, 'Oh, it's a soft, uncured pork sausage.'" Then he summed up the Fehlinger method: "It's, like, the more diamonds you are wearing, the higher the chances that I would force you to eat headcheese." —NINA TEICHOLZ

DEPT. OF HOUSING

Eleanor Roosevelt's ghost helps sell an Upper East Side property.

THE typical New York real-estate broker doesn't have much time to linger, let alone to be polite. The several dozen brokers who swooped in last Tuesday for the Corcoran Group's open house at Eleanor Roosevelt's final residence, in the East Seventies, however, were on their best behavior for a couple of reasons. First, the five-story neo-Renaissance-style town house they were previewing was not unreasonably priced, at $4.95 million. Second, Edna Gurewitsch, the seller, who shared and co-owned the house with the First Lady from 1959 to 1962, was on the premises.

"I remember when she moved in she kept her hat on the whole day," Gurewitsch was telling some prospective buyers who were traipsing through her bedroom. Gurewitsch's late husband, David, was Mrs. Roosevelt's physician and friend. While the First Lady was alive, she occupied the second and third floors of the house, and the Gurewitsches lived in the top two.

"If I heard her coming in late at night from a trip," Gurewitsch said, "I'd go downstairs in my bare feet and help carry her bags. Sometimes she'd leave rhubarb or strawberry jam that she bottled in Hyde Park outside our door. She kept a picture of my husband by her bed."

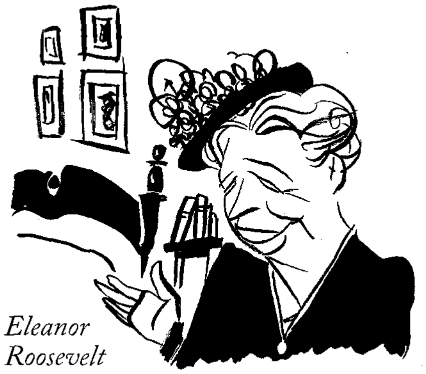
"Aw, how sweet," said one broker.

"You must have had many beautiful experiences," said another.

"Do all the fireplaces work?" asked a third.

Most real-estate agents will tell you that one of the cardinal rules of showing a high-end property is to do so while the seller is out. Homeowners, often less glamorous in appearance than the home they are selling, can be a sobering sight to an aspirational buyer. Sometimes homeowners will show off the wrong things. Usually, they talk too much and make people with busy schedules feel obligated to stand there and listen. Gurewitsch, an impeccably dressed former art dealer, who speaks in the soft, ringing tones of a museum docent, was a distraction, of course, but a charming one. As she moved around Roosevelt's former bedroom (now rented to a young woman with a taste for splashy colors and fifties-modern shapes), she talked about where Khrushchev sat when he visited, and where the TV was positioned for the Kennedy Election Night party.

"This photograph was taken of us on a sleigh in St. Moritz," she said on the stairs, blocking the way down for a group of hurried visitors. ("What is this?" one sniped. "An open house or a class?") She pointed out several of the hundreds of framed photographs that her husband took while travelling with Mrs. Roosevelt, among them shots of the First Lady with Gandhi, Tito, Harry Belafonte, Queen Elizabeth, and J.F.K., who was shown at Hyde Park, holding a cocktail. "This must be the only picture of a Presidential candidate holding a Martini," she said.


Eleanor Roosevelt

After the last of the visitors had gone, she was left with a Corcoran executive, who rushed from room to room, turning off lights. "You don't have to do that," said Gurewitsch. "But if you'd like you can come back tonight and cook some supper." At the door, buoyed, perhaps, by the prospect of several million imminent dollars, she did a little tap dance.

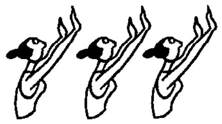
"Eleanor Roosevelt did things her

own way until the very end," she said as she waved goodbye at the landmarked front door. "As for me, I plan to go tap-dancing into the twilight."

—BOB MORRIS

DEPT. OF KEEPING FIT

Muscles need accessories, too.

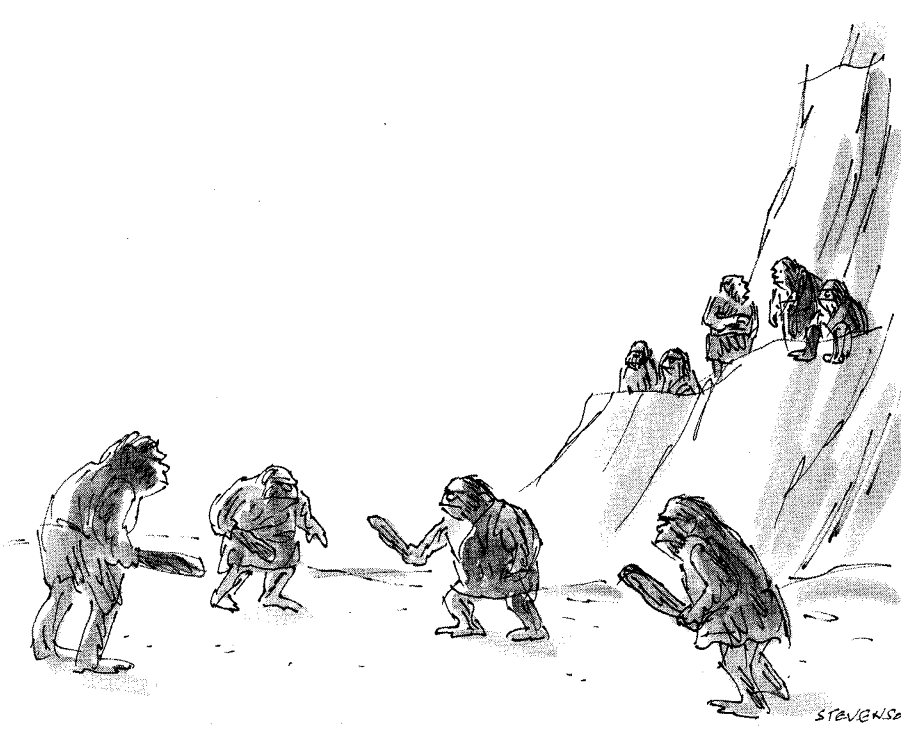


WHEN the E.C.A. World Fitness Alliance held its convention at the Marriott Marquis the other day, Angie Daye, a young, irrepressible aerobics instructor at the David Barton Gym and other places around town, walked in and went nuts. Loud, *very* loud, percussive music was blasting away from booths selling buy-four-get-one-free tapes and CDs under banners labelled "Power Music," "Dynamix," and "Musicflex."

Angie, who has rosy cheeks, a lot of dark, curly hair, a hoarse voice, and an exemplary body, danced over to a booth. "I move to anything with a good bass beat. Gotta move, as soon as I hear this stuff, gotta move," she said. "Gotta shop till I drop. The good stuff gets grabbed up so fast."

She bought Power Music's "Club Trax 14," "Mid-Tempo Power Mix 11," "Top 40 Step Volume 12." She asked for Rob Glick's "Power Mix." All sold out. "They say it's the hot new one," Angie said. "These guys do their own mixes, with their own groups, with their own made-up names. If I played hip-hop for some of my classes, they'd throw me out. The people I teach are very critical of the music; they don't realize how much this stuff costs." Angie teaches a class called "Swing Time" to tunes such as "There's No Business Like Show Business" and "I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Outa My Hair" and Handel's "Hallelujah" chorus.

"I'm out of shape," Angie said. "I had kids. Before I blew up, I used to teach everything all over the city. I'm here to see what's happening on the cutting edge, and to see friends, and friends of friends, like Hasan Bakr, here." She already had her arms around a little guy with long black braids who was carrying a large backpack from which he handed her a CD titled "Heritage." He took ten bucks for it, then said that he and his percussion group were going to play in a few minutes for an aerobics class called "Slam!"



"It's the final four."

• •

"We'll have a chance to melt. We're all from the same thread," Hasan Bakr said.

"That's my friend Petra Kolber's class. I'm coming, I'll be there," Angie said. "Funky hip-hop stuff."

First, she headed for a class called "Spinning Endurance," led by a certified spinning instructor, Iona Passik, who got a hug from Angie. Eighty-five people were pedalling, each on a kind of stationary front-wheel-only Schwinn bike called the Johnny G. Spinner. Another instructor yelled, "If anyone has a favorite song, sing it!" But nobody did. "It's a moving meditation," a third instructor explained. Angie gave the class a few impatient minutes. "Spinning is hot, but I came here to shop," she said.

Angie bought about twenty rubber SPRI Xercise Bands, nine inches by five-eighths of an inch each, which she uses to exercise her arms and chest while she's seated. "I carry them around in my purse," she said. Promoters for Crunch Fitness handed her a brochure for beauty products bearing a smiling photograph of Richard Nixon with the legend "For People Who Sweat." Angie didn't bite.

She bought a French-blue Resist-A-Ball—a twenty-one-inch stability ball with protrusions, which you lie on or sit on, using one group of muscles to move against the force of gravity while other muscles work for balance and keep you from rolling off. She considered an Urban Rebounding mini trampoline, but decided no.

Angie started looking happier and happier as she bought a dozen pairs of Extra Heavy Super Slouch socks in white and in black. Then she settled in for an hour of trying on Avia sneakers and wound up buying two pairs. "Now we're talking," Angie said, clutching three pairs of Avia tights and matching sports bras and camisole fitness tops. "The Tactel stuff feels great next to the skin. I gotta grab it now. It'll be all gone before you know it."

One of her friends, returning from a lecture, started telling her about new fitness theories that she had just listened to. "Fitness is not a guy thing or a girl thing, it's a goal thing," the friend said.

"Nobody retains that stuff. Exercise is exercise," Angie said, stroking her new sneakers and tights and figuring out that she had spent four hundred and sixty dollars at the convention so far and was nowhere near ready to drop.

—LILLIAN ROSS

ANNALS OF ESPIONAGE

SADDAM'S BEST FRIEND

How the C.I.A. made it a lot easier for the Iraqi leader to rearm.

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

CIA
UNSCOM
Coe 99

When the C.I.A. trampled the U.N.'s turf, Saddam survived, arms control didn't.

SUE COE

Last December, after Saddam Hussein threatened to end seven years of United Nations arms-control inspections, President Clinton ordered American attacks on Iraq. Once again, the world watched, on television, as missiles fell on carefully picked targets. The purpose of the attacks, Clinton told reporters, was to "degrade" Iraq's capacity for waging war, and he added, "I gave the order because I believe we cannot allow Saddam Hussein to dismantle UNSCOM and resume the production of weapons of mass destruction with impunity." The President was mistaken. The United Nations Special Commission for Iraq, known as UNSCOM, had already been effectively dismantled, by the shortsighted policies of his own Administration. Then, a few hours after Clinton spoke, William Cohen, the Secretary of Defense, appeared on television. "One thing should be absolutely clear," he told reporters. "We are concentrating on military targets." That, too, was a misstatement, for two of the targets were sites where Saddam was known to entertain mistresses, and they were specifically struck in the hope of assassinating him.

Saddam responded to the bombing—and the bungled assassination attempt—by formally ousting UNSCOM and turning anew to Russia, historically his most important trading partner. Today, eight years after the Gulf War, American policy has collapsed in Iraq, and a Cold War mentality has returned. Saddam is unchecked by U.N. inspectors as he pursues his goal of becoming a nuclear power, with the aid of Russian strategic materials. Saddam's ally in these efforts is Yevgeny Primakov, the Russian Prime Minister, a longtime friend who, according to highly classified communications intelligence, received at least one large payment from Iraq—by wire transfer—in November of 1997. The distrust of Primakov throughout the American intelligence community is acute. One former C.I.A. operative told me, "I don't know how many times we had to say this to Strobe"—Strobe Talbott, the Deputy Secretary of State—"but Primakov is just not a good guy."

The targeting of Saddam had grown, in part, out of an extraordinary intelligence coup by a team of UNSCOM arms inspectors. The team—headed by Scott Ritter, a former U.S. Marine Corps intelligence officer—had been trying for two years to unscramble the encrypted communications system that Saddam has used since the end of the Gulf War to hide the full extent of his strategic stockpile. Ritter and his UNSCOM colleagues knew that there were missiles and warheads to be found. They also knew that Saddam, who travelled frequently in and around Baghdad, lived in constant fear of attacks on his life—from both inside and outside Iraq—and had surrounded himself with a huge apparatus of bodyguards, known as the Special Security Organization. Saddam frequently communicated, through aides, with his entourage from secure telephones scattered around Baghdad and from a radio telephone in his car. UNSCOM also knew (from a high-level Iraqi defector) that these forces had orders to do more than protect Saddam: they were also responsible for safeguarding Iraq's hidden weapons.

The encryption system on Saddam's telephones, made in Sweden, was as sophisticated as any on the international market. The phones had a series of channels, and on each channel were algorithms that chopped the signals into hundreds of bits as the channels were switched. To get at the signals, Ritter's people took the extreme risk of operating, under the cover of the U.N. flag, an interception station in UNSCOM's offices in Baghdad and in a mobile unit.

Early in the spring of 1998, the gamble paid off. The algorithms were unscrambled, and Saddam's most closely protected communications were suddenly pouring into UNSCOM. "It was one of the most valuable operations since the Cold War," one informed U.N. adviser told me. But UNSCOM's mission was to uncover Iraq's complex system of concealing its weapons program; the mechanics of Saddam's personal security were a benefit only if they could lead to hidden arms caches.

The Central Intelligence Agency, which had been helping UNSCOM inter-

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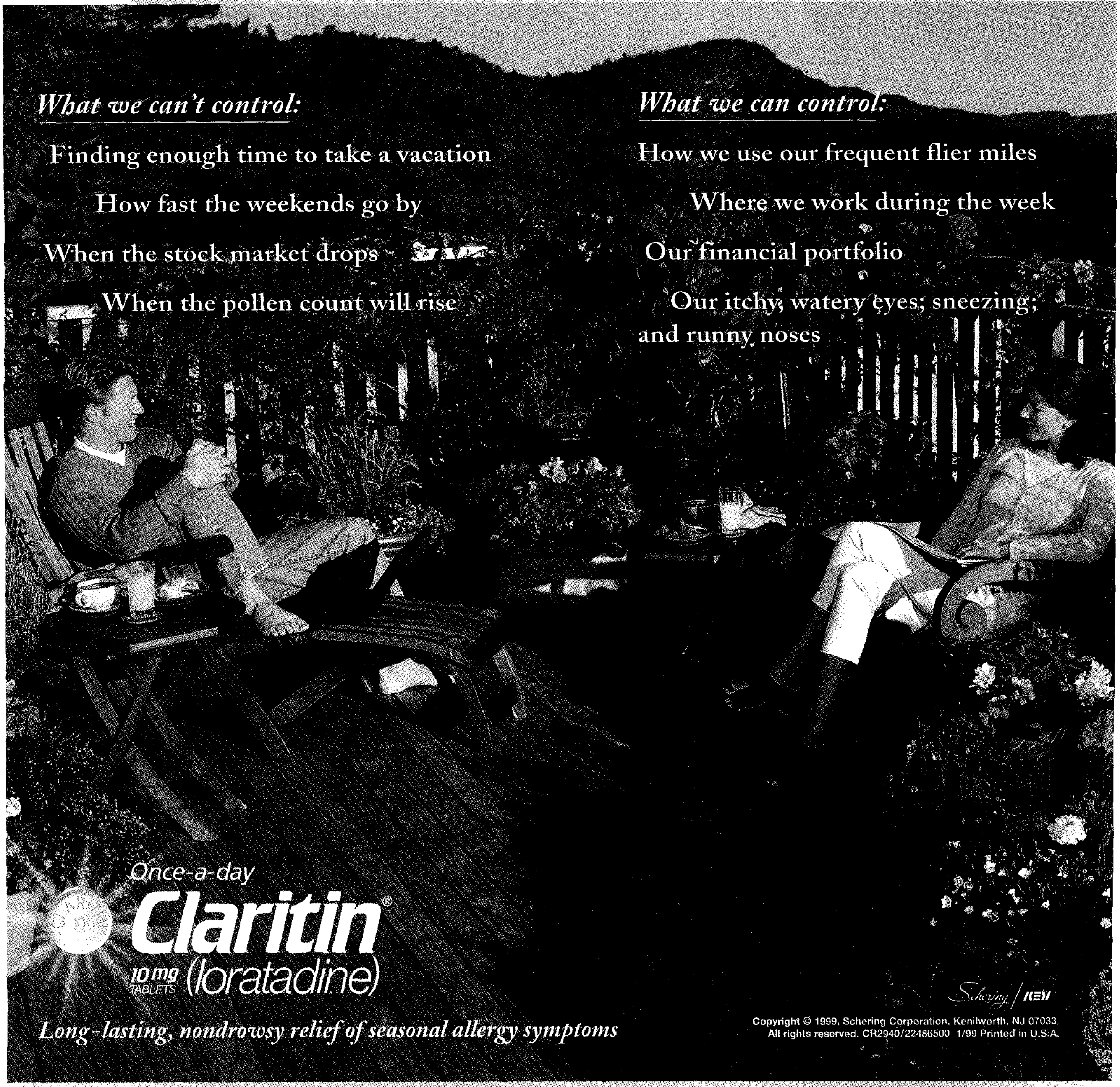

What we can't control:

Finding enough time to take a vacation

How fast the weekends go by

When the stock market drops

When the pollen count will rise

What we can control:

How we use our frequent flier miles

Where we work during the week

Our financial portfolio

Our itchy, watery eyes; sneezing; and runny noses

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Claritin®
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TABLETS, SYRUP, and RAPIDLY-DISINTEGRATING TABLETS

BRIEF SUMMARY (For full Prescribing Information, see package insert.)

INDICATIONS AND USAGE: CLARITIN is indicated for the relief of nasal and non-nasal symptoms of seasonal allergic rhinitis and for the treatment of chronic idiopathic urticaria in patients 6 years of age or older.

CONTRAINDICATIONS: CLARITIN is contraindicated in patients who are hypersensitive to this medication or to any of its ingredients.

PRECAUTIONS: General: Patients with liver impairment or renal insufficiency (GFR < 30 mL/min) should be given a lower initial dose (10 mg every other day). (See **CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY: Special Populations.)**

Drug Interactions: Loratadine (10 mg once daily) has been coadministered with therapeutic doses of erythromycin, cimetidine, and ketoconazole in controlled clinical pharmacology studies in adult volunteers. Although increased plasma concentrations (AUC 0-24 hrs) of loratadine and/or descarboethoxyloratadine were observed following coadministration of loratadine with each of these drugs in normal volunteers (n = 24 in each study), there were no clinically relevant changes in the safety profile of loratadine, as assessed by electrocardiographic parameters, clinical laboratory tests, vital signs, and adverse events. There were no significant effects on QT_c intervals, and no reports of sedation or syncope. No effects on plasma concentrations of cimetidine or ketoconazole were observed. Plasma concentrations (AUC 0-24 hrs) of erythromycin decreased 15% with coadministration of loratadine relative to that observed with erythromycin alone. The clinical relevance of this difference is unknown. These above findings are summarized in the following table:

Effects on Plasma Concentrations (AUC 0-24 hrs) of Loratadine and Descarboethoxyloratadine After 10 Days of Coadministration (Loratadine 10 mg) in Normal Volunteers

	Loratadine	Descarboethoxyloratadine
Erythromycin (500 mg Q8h)	+ 40%	+46%
Cimetidine (300 mg QID)	+103%	+ 6%
Ketoconazole (200 mg Q12h)	+307%	+73%

There does not appear to be an increase in adverse events in subjects who received oral contraceptives and loratadine.

Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis, and Impairment of Fertility: In an 18-month carcinogenicity study in mice and a 2-year study in rats, loratadine was administered in the diet at doses up to 40 mg/kg (mice) and 25 mg/kg (rats). In the carcinogenicity studies, pharmacokinetic assessments were carried out to determine animal exposure to the drug. AUC data demonstrated that the exposure of mice given 40 mg/kg of loratadine was 3.6 (loratadine) and 18 (descarboethoxyloratadine) times higher than in humans given the maximum recommended daily oral dose. Exposure of rats given 25 mg/kg of loratadine was 28 (loratadine) and 67 (descarboethoxyloratadine) times higher than in humans given the maximum recommended daily oral dose. Male mice given 40 mg/kg had a significantly higher incidence of hepatocellular tumors (combined adenomas and carcinomas) than concurrent controls. In rats, a significantly higher incidence of hepatocellular tumors (combined adenomas and carcinomas) was observed in males given 10 mg/kg and males and females given 25 mg/kg. The clinical significance of these findings during long-term use of CLARITIN is not known.

In mutagenicity studies, there was no evidence of mutagenic potential in reverse (Ames) or forward point mutation (CHO-HGPRT) assays, or in the assay for DNA damage (rat primary hepatocyte unscheduled DNA assay) or in two assays for chromosomal aberrations (human peripheral blood lymphocyte clastogenesis assay and the mouse bone marrow erythrocyte micronucleus assay). In the mouse lymphoma assay, a positive finding occurred in the nonactivated but not the activated phase of the study.

Decreased fertility in male rats, shown by lower female conception rates, occurred at an oral dose of 64 mg/kg (approximately 50 times the maximum recommended human daily oral dose on a mg/m^2 basis) and was reversible with cessation of dosing. Loratadine had no effect on male or female fertility or reproduction in the rat at an oral dose of approximately 24 mg/kg (approximately 20 times the maximum recommended human daily oral dose on a mg/m^2 basis).

Pregnancy Category B: There was no evidence of animal teratogenicity in studies performed in rats and rabbits at oral doses up to 96 mg/kg (approximately 75 times and 150 times, respectively, the maximum recommended human daily oral dose on a mg/m^2 basis). There are, however, no adequate and well-controlled studies in pregnant women. Because animal reproduction studies are not always predictive of human response, CLARITIN should be used during pregnancy only if clearly needed.

Nursing Mothers: Loratadine and its metabolite, descarboethoxyloratadine, pass easily into breast milk and achieve concentrations that are equivalent to plasma levels with an AUC_{milk}/AUC_{plasma} ratio of 1.17 and 0.85 for loratadine and descarboethoxyloratadine, respectively. Following a single oral dose of 40 mg, a small amount of loratadine and descarboethoxyloratadine was excreted into the breast milk (approximately 0.03% of 40 mg over 48 hours). A decision should be made whether to discontinue nursing or to discontinue the drug, taking into account the importance of the drug to the mother. Caution should be exercised when CLARITIN is administered to a nursing woman.

Pediatric Use: The safety of CLARITIN Syrup at a daily dose of 10 mg has been demonstrated in 188 pediatric patients 6-12 years of age in placebo-controlled 2-week trials. The effectiveness of CLARITIN for the treatment of seasonal allergic rhinitis and chronic idiopathic urticaria in this pediatric age group is based on an extrapolation of the demonstrated efficacy of CLARITIN in adults in these conditions and the likelihood that the disease course, pathophysiology, and the drug's effect are substantially similar to that of the adults. The recommended dose for the pediatric population is based on cross-study comparison of the pharmacokinetics of CLARITIN in adults and pediatric subjects and on the safety profile of loratadine in both adults and pediatric patients at doses equal to or higher than the recommended doses. The safety and effectiveness of CLARITIN in pediatric patients under 6 years of age have not been established.

ADVERSE REACTIONS: CLARITIN Tablets: Approximately 90,000 patients, aged 12 and older, received CLARITIN Tablets 10 mg once daily in controlled and uncontrolled studies. Placebo-controlled clinical trials at the recommended dose of 10 mg once a day varied from 2 weeks' to 6 months' duration. The rate of premature withdrawal from these trials was approximately 2% in both the treated and placebo groups.

REPORTED ADVERSE EVENTS WITH AN INCIDENCE OF MORE THAN 2% IN PLACEBO-CONTROLLED ALLERGIC RHINITIS CLINICAL TRIALS IN PATIENTS 12 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER

PERCENT OF PATIENTS REPORTING

	LORATADINE 10 mg QD n = 1926	**PLACEBO** n = 2545	**CLEMASTINE** 1 mg BID n = 536	**TERFENADINE** 60 mg BID n = 684
Headache	12	11	8	8
Somnolence	8	6	22	9
Fatigue	4	3	10	2
Dry Mouth	3	2	4	3

Adverse events reported in placebo-controlled chronic idiopathic urticaria trials were similar to those reported in allergic rhinitis studies.

Adverse event rates did not appear to differ significantly based on age, sex, or race, although the number of nonwhite subjects was relatively small.

CLARITIN REDITABS (loratadine rapidly-disintegrating tablets): Approximately 500 patients received CLARITIN REDITABS (loratadine rapidly-disintegrating tablets) in controlled clinical trials of 2 weeks' duration. In these studies, adverse events were similar in type and frequency to those seen with CLARITIN Tablets and placebo.

Administration of CLARITIN REDITABS (loratadine rapidly-disintegrating tablets) did not result in an increased reporting frequency of mouth or tongue irritation.

CLARITIN Syrup: Approximately 300 pediatric patients 6 to 12 years of age received 10 mg loratadine once daily in controlled clinical trials for a period of 8-15 days. Among these, 188 children were treated with 10 mg loratadine syrup once daily in placebo-controlled trials. Adverse events in these pediatric patients were observed to occur with type and frequency similar to those seen in the adult population. The rate of premature discontinuance due to adverse events among pediatric patients receiving loratadine 10 mg daily was less than 1%.

ADVERSE EVENTS OCCURRING WITH A FREQUENCY OF ≥ 2% IN LORATADINE SYRUP-TREATED PATIENTS (6-12 YEARS OLD) IN PLACEBO-CONTROLLED TRIALS, AND MORE FREQUENTLY THAN IN THE PLACEBO GROUP

PERCENT OF PATIENTS REPORTING

	LORATADINE 10 mg QD n = 188	**PLACEBO** n = 262	**CHLORPHENIRAMINE** 2-4 mg BID/TID n = 170
Nervousness	4	2	2
Wheezing	4	2	5
Fatigue	3	2	5
Hyperkinesia	3	1	1
Abdominal Pain	2	0	0
Conjunctivitis	2	<1	1
Dysphonia	2	<1	0
Malaise	2	0	1
Upper Respiratory Tract Infection	2	<1	0

In addition to those adverse events reported above (≥ 2%), the following adverse events have been reported in at least one patient in CLARITIN clinical trials in adult and pediatric patients:

Autonomic Nervous System: Altered lacrimation, altered salivation, flushing, hypoesthesia, impotence, increased sweating, thirst.

Body As A Whole: Angioneurotic edema, asthenia, back pain, blurred vision, chest pain, earache, eye pain, fever, leg cramps, malaise, rigors, tinnitus, viral infection, weight gain.

Cardiovascular System: Hypertension, hypotension, palpitations, supraventricular tachyarrhythmias, syncope, tachycardia.

Central and Peripheral Nervous System: Blepharospasm, dizziness, dysphonia, hypertonia, migraine, paresthesia, tremor, vertigo.

Gastrointestinal System: Altered taste, anorexia, constipation, diarrhea, dyspepsia, flatulence, gastritis, hiccup, increased appetite, nausea, stomatitis, toothache, vomiting.

Musculoskeletal System: Arthralgia, myalgia.

Psychiatric: Agitation, amnesia, anxiety, confusion, decreased libido, depression, impaired concentration, insomnia, irritability, paroniria.

Reproductive System: Breast pain, dysmenorrhea, menorrhagia, vaginitis.

Respiratory System: Bronchitis, bronchospasm, coughing, dyspnea, epistaxis, hemoptysis, laryngitis, nasal dryness, pharyngitis, sinusitis, sneezing.

Skin and Appendages: Dermatitis, dry hair, dry skin, photosensitivity reaction, pruritus, purpura, rash, urticaria.

Urinary System: Altered micturition, urinary discoloration, urinary incontinence, urinary retention.

In addition, the following spontaneous adverse events have been reported rarely during the marketing of loratadine: abnormal hepatic function, including jaundice, hepatitis, and hepatic necrosis; alopecia; anaphylaxis; breast enlargement; erythema multiforme; peripheral edema; and seizures.

OVERDOSAGE: In adults, somnolence, tachycardia, and headache have been reported with overdoses greater than 10 mg with the Tablet formulation (40 to 180 mg). Extrapyramidal signs and palpitations have been reported in children with overdoses of greater than 10 mg of CLARITIN Syrup. In the event of overdosage, general symptomatic and supportive measures should be instituted promptly and maintained for as long as necessary.

Treatment of overdosage would reasonably consist of emesis (ipecac syrup), except in patients with impaired consciousness, followed by the administration of activated charcoal to absorb any remaining drug. If vomiting is unsuccessful, or contraindicated, gastric lavage should be performed with normal saline. Saline cathartics may also be of value for rapid dilution of bowel contents. Loratadine is not eliminated by hemodialysis. It is not known if loratadine is eliminated by peritoneal dialysis.

No deaths occurred at oral doses up to 5000 mg/kg in rats and mice (greater than 2400 and 1200 times, respectively, the maximum recommended human daily oral dose on a mg/m^2 basis). Single oral doses of loratadine showed no effects in rats, mice, and monkeys at doses as high as 10 times the maximum recommended human daily oral dose on a mg/m^2 basis.

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pret its intelligence findings since 1991, had a different agenda. Its goal, authorized by President Clinton, was to work with Iraqi dissidents, in Saddam's Special Security Organization and elsewhere, to overthrow the regime, by any means possible. In the C.I.A.'s view, Ritter's intelligence unit was always in the way—and, in any case, could not be trusted with sensitive information; the C.I.A. felt that any important intelligence it might supply to UNSCOM would inevitably find its way back to the Iraqi regime. "There were killer fights about getting involved with the U.N.," one former C.I.A. official told me. "We don't get involved with international organizations."

In March of 1998, a high-tech team from the National Security Agency, which is responsible for American communications intelligence, flew to Bahrain to review the telephone intercepts. One official recalled that when the intercepts had been decrypted and translated, the Americans told themselves, "Here's the best intelligence that we've ever had!" The official went on, "Saddam is suddenly exposed for the first time. He's the Godfather! He gets drunk, starts raving like a madman, and his secretary will get on and say he's lost his mind—ordering murders. We never had him on this level before." Like Mafia leaders, Saddam rarely, if ever, uses the telephone himself, but relies on aides to relay his commands. The overheard "secretary" was Presidential Secretary Abid Hamid Mahmoud, Saddam's closest aide, who was much feared by Iraqis. At the same time, the official said, senior N.S.A. managers were "panicked," because the information from the telephone intercepts was "controlled by the United Nations."

The Americans felt that Ritter's intelligence was too important to be left to arms controllers. For the first time, with the aid of intercepts, Saddam's hour-to-hour whereabouts could conceivably be tracked—and even anticipated. Within a few months, the Clinton Administration persuaded Richard Butler, an Australian who in the summer of 1997 had been appointed the executive chairman of UNSCOM, to tell Ritter and his men in Baghdad that they would have to get out of the signals-intelligence business: Washington, and not UNSCOM, would now decide whom and what to listen to. (Butler disputes this account.)

Thus, in April of 1998, operational control of the Saddam intercepts shifted to one of America's least publicized intelligence units, the Special Collection Service. The S.C.S., which is jointly operated by the C.I.A. and the N.S.A., is responsible for, among other things, deploying highly trained teams of electronics specialists in sensitive areas around the world to monitor diplomatic and other kinds of communications. Its operations are often run from secure sites inside American embassies.

The UNSCOM team in Baghdad felt betrayed, and believed that it would now be vulnerable to capture and prosecution by Iraq on espionage charges. The team's equipment was still intercepting crucial telephone calls, but the United States was controlling the "take." Ritter, desperate to keep the operation under U.N. control, asked the Israelis to process the telephone intercepts. (Israeli intelligence had been the first group to tell UNSCOM about the importance of Saddam's Special Security Organization.) The Israelis refused (under pressure from Washington), and the UNSCOM operation was shut down until July, when the Americans unilaterally installed their own collection devices in the UNSCOM offices in Baghdad.

Ritter was reluctant to discuss the specifics of the UNSCOM intelligence program with me, but in a series of interviews recently he stressed that there was an enormous difference between accumulating information on behalf of the United Nations and accumulating it on behalf of the United States. "Stuff was being collected"—by the Americans—"without our knowledge and without Butler's knowledge," Ritter said. "That's espionage. My team was worried. I told Butler about it"—the American operation—"and said we have to shut it down. It didn't happen."

Once the American technicians were in control, they focussed on Saddam—and not on his missiles and warheads. They eventually found a pattern in Saddam's movements, as tracked by intercepts, which they believed might lead to a successful attempt to eliminate him. Saddam regularly saw his mistresses in two sites—one a retreat at Auja, near his ancestral home, Tikrit, and the other at his daughter's villa in Babil, in suburban Baghdad. When the American forces attacked Iraq in December, cruise missiles destroyed both targets.

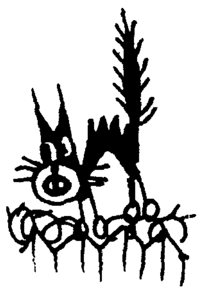
Saddam, of course, survived. One senior Clinton Administration intelligence official acknowledged the failure, but he added, "In our business, you never have one-hundred-per-cent assurance. Let's assume you know he's there. You've got a time delay. How do you know a guy doesn't finish the business with his mistress and go on his way, or to the bathroom. It may be a double"—someone posing as Saddam—"or he may have changed locations. There's so much potential for a slip between cup and lip."

A Republican who served at a high level in the Reagan and Bush Administrations told me that he had learned before the December raid that the Administration had "a fix" on Saddam's whereabouts. Administration officials, he said, "were touting" the fact that they had good intelligence. "People treat Saddam as an idiot," he said, referring to Clinton and his senior aides. He added that the failure of the bombing was evidence that Saddam had been aware of the penetration of his telephones. In his opinion, the man said, "He was doubling or tripling on the coms"—intelligence jargon meaning that Saddam was deliberately generating misleading or incorrect statements.

Other high-level intelligence officials I spoke with had reservations about the Administration's eagerness to eliminate Saddam in the absence of any long-term strategic plan for dealing with the region. "I'm not against nailing the guy," one fully informed military officer said to me, "but then what do you do?" Assassination, he added, "is not a policy. It's a tool of policy." (Officially, of course, "assassination," which is barred by Executive Order, was not the purpose of the raids.) A former intelligence official who still consults at a high level in the Clinton Administration told me, "Eventually, they'll succeed. And then what do we get?"

The result of the American hijacking of the U.N.'s intelligence activities was that Saddam survived but UNSCOM did not. "The American government walked on its dick—and with golf shoes," a dispirited U.N. official told me. "They just goofed us."

In retrospect, given the inherent conflict between the C.I.A. and UNSCOM, the remarkable fact is that UNSCOM lasted as long as it did. In early 1991, during the Gulf War, the member states of the United Nations had helped the United States roll back the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The spirit of post-Cold War coöperation promised a miracle: UNSCOM, operating on behalf of the U.N. Security Council, would utilize the secret intelligence agencies of its member states, Communist and non-Communist alike, to investigate the Iraqi arsenal. Dozens of nations joined Washington in providing intelligence support—and their most sophisticated intelligence operatives—to the early UNSCOM inspections.



The first executive chairman of UNSCOM, Rolf Ekeus, of Sweden, was a diplomat and arms-control expert with an amiable personality that masked a determination to run UNSCOM as an independent U.N. operation, and not as an adjunct of American foreign policy. Ekeus did turn to an American, however, for help in setting up an intelligence unit. He chose Scott Ritter, who had served as an intelligence officer in the Gulf War. In the security-conscious world of intelligence, Ritter arrived at the U.N. with high-risk baggage: earlier, while serving in a top-secret Pentagon arms-control job in the Soviet Union, he had been suspected of being romantically involved with a Georgian national. (He subsequently married the woman.) With this shaky security file, he was nobody's choice in Washington for the UNSCOM job, and some C.I.A. officials chose to be skeptical of his bona fides. Initially, the agency insisted that Ritter be excluded from its own intelligence briefings to UNSCOM, although Nikita Smidovich, a former Russian diplomat and arms-control expert, who was also assigned to UNSCOM's intelligence unit, was allowed to attend them. An internal C.I.A. review by a senior intelligence official named Samuel Hoskinson, however, quickly concluded that Ritter was not a security risk, and the agency dropped its restriction. "I never thought Ritter was going to give anything away," Hoskinson told me. "Anyway, we're not stupid. We don't share everything with the U.N."

The proposed sharing of intelligence had some American proponents. "It was the first time we ever turned over [intelligence] assets to a group like the United Nations," recalled David C. Underwood, a retired Air Force colonel who in 1991 was assigned to serve as a State Department liaison to UNSCOM. "I'm a twenty-six-year veteran—a Cold War warrior," he told me. "We had the greatest scientists and the great intelligence analysts of forty countries working together, with all hands on top of the table." He then described a dramatic early meeting of UNSCOM at which a Russian military expert briefed his counterparts from the Defense Department on how the Iraqis had camouflaged their fleet of mobile Scud missile launchers, with Russian help, before the Gulf War. (Only a few of the Scuds were destroyed by Allied bombing during the war.) "I had a colonel from Russian intelligence and one from the C.I.A. at the same table," Underwood said.

Not everyone in Washington shared Underwood's enthusiasm. "Some people in our government could not stand it," he explained, referring to the senior officers of the C.I.A.'s Directorate of Operations. "You have to understand the culture. People in the C.I.A. are a mixture of professionals and careerists overlaid with a Cold War mentality. The impulse is to spy." In the months before Iraq's August, 1990, invasion of Kuwait, however, Saddam had been relentless in driving potential American spies out of his government and military. "His counterintelligence blew them away," I was told by a former C.I.A. operations officer. "All the significant assets we had in Iraq died in 1989. The agency had zilch." The operators in the C.I.A. inevitably saw UNSCOM—if such an agency had to be tolerated—as a vehicle for collecting intelligence on Iraq. The U.N. inspectors were on the ground in Iraq, where the C.I.A. could not be.

The struggle between UNSCOM and Washington intensified in September of 1991, when a U.N. inspection team was detained by Iraqi forces in a Baghdad parking lot for four days, after its leaders refused to return newly discovered documents dealing with efforts by Iraq to obtain nuclear weapons. To Ekeus's surprise, some details of the parking-lot standoff were made public by the Bush Administration—an American member of the UNSCOM delegation had been "signalling privately" to the United States via a secure satellite-telephone link. Ekeus upbraided the American for his back-channel reporting to Washington, and soon received an angry telephone call from Richard Clarke, the director of the State Department's office of political-military affairs. "He said they"—the American inspectors—"should report to him and not to the United Nations," Ekeus recalled, adding dryly, "We had a nasty conversation." Ekeus held his ground, and refused to authorize any independent reporting from his inspection teams to Washington. "The Americans were irritated at us, because they could not control the flow of information," he said.

Before leaving office, President Bush, politically embarrassed by Saddam's defiance after the Gulf War, secretly authorized the C.I.A. to begin plotting a coup. When Clinton succeeded Bush, he and his national-security adviser, Anthony Lake, renewed that authorization. But the new President and his aides wanted to keep Iraq off the front page. Ekeus recalled, "Lake used to say to me, 'Don't give us sweaty palms' "—that is, don't create any crises. Dealing with Iraq became a secondary issue for the Washington bureaucracy, and the day-to-day management was left to junior officers in the Pentagon and the State Department—and, of course, to the C.I.A. Lake and one of his senior aides on the National Security Council, George Tenet (who was named C.I.A. director in 1996), became fervent supporters of a quick fix—the elimination of Saddam Hussein by a bloody coup d'état. At various times, they suggested that it was to be triggered by the Iraqi exile movement or from within Saddam's immediate circle of advisers. The failure of the White House to understand the severe limitations of the C.I.A.'s Directorate of Operations—only a few officers in the Near East Division spoke Arabic, for example—would mar Iraqi policy and create enormous difficulties for UNSCOM.

One agency officer in particular, Steven Richter, who eventually took over Iraqi operations as head of the Near East Division, opposed UNSCOM's independence. Renowned inside the agency as a territorial and single-minded manager, Richter had grown up in the Directorate of Operations, and had served two decades abroad, much of it in the Middle East. Before he was recalled to Washington to run the Near East Division, he had been chief of station in Amman, Jordan, which was the overseas center for the C.I.A.'s coup plotting inside Iraq. Just before his promotion, Richter had been deeply involved in the machinations of a group of high-level Iraqi defectors who he and his superiors thought provided the best hope of eliminating Saddam.

Richter was a controversial, and intimidating, manager—brilliant, but, as even his defenders acknowledge, with considerable faults. "Steven really knows his business," one colleague told me. "He's probably one of the savviest operational guys. But he's still dealing with a deck from the Cold War era. It's the D.O. mentality—very turfish." Another colleague said that Richter's insistence on making all decisions himself had been extremely destructive to the Near East Division. "He's in control, and you don't question him," the intelligence officer told me. "He's driven off the talented core of Arabists." A former White House official similarly depicted Richter as consistently letting "his ego get in his way on the job," and explained, "He takes any person with independence and says, 'Get out of here.' Everybody who has any clue—it's 'Out of here.' " The result, the former official added, was that Richter ended up surrounded by "tail-wagging idiots" and found himself constantly being outmaneuvered by Saddam.

The Near East Division was internally polarized as the result of an earlier Richter assignment, as the director of a secret operations center in Germany in the late nineteen-eighties. The center's mission had been to collect intelligence from Iranians who were spying, at great personal risk, inside Iran. The operation was primitive. From Iran, the agents mailed their intelligence reports to a seemingly innocent private home or a mailbox in Germany—known in the trade as an "accommodation address"—to which the C.I.A. had access. "There were only two accommodation addresses" for Iran inside Germany, one of Richter's former associates told me. "It was assumed that Iranian counter-intelligence was locked onto them and saw them." Richter discounted the warnings of colleagues and ordered the agents to double their reporting. (At the time, as everyone involved understood, a basic measure of a station chief's success was sheer volume of intelligence reports.) Astonishingly, as a subsequent internal C.I.A. counter-intelligence investigation showed, letters sent to Richter's agents in Iran were often addressed in the same hand and mailed in batches that included the return accommodation addresses. The Iranians quickly became suspicious and blew the network apart. More than thirty Iranian informants were seized and put to death. Many of Richter's associates remain convinced that the requirement for more message traffic was their un-doing. One associate told me, "Everybody in the organization who has a memory of this knows that Richter was guilty of the worst sin a senior operations officer could be accused of—being sloppy."

IN early 1994, Rolf Ekeus was privately approached by an Israeli intelligence official, and he agreed to open discussions with Israel on the sharing of UNSCOM information. The first meeting, in New York, provided an electric moment. The Israelis had turned over a stack of intelligence reports, and the UNSCOM staff began rapidly flipping through the pages. At first, the documents seemed humdrum—"mostly an account of Iraqi stockpiles," Scott Ritter recalled. But one paragraph revealed the existence of the Iraqi weapons-concealment operation and the élite units in Saddam's Special Security Organization that were assigned to it.

Ritter now saw an opportunity, and envisaged a joint Israeli-United Nations signals-intelligence (SIGINT) operation aimed at Saddam's Special Security Organization. This prospect triggered acute anxiety at the C.I.A. What's more, Ritter and his colleagues wanted Washington's permission to share U-2 reconnaissance photographs of Iraq with the Israelis, whose photo interpreters were highly regarded. That was a hard sell, and it took more than six months. Ekeus himself had to intervene with John M. Deutch, who became C.I.A. director in May of 1995. Ekeus had enormous leverage in the dispute, for the U-2 flights were under the direct control of UNSCOM and could not be challenged by Saddam. If Washington rejected Ekeus's request and insisted that the U-2 film not be shared with Israel, all parties understood that Ekeus would simply stop the U-2 flights. Ekeus got his way, but only after a bitter struggle.

The Directorate of Operations resisted the move. "I can't tell you how much the D.O. sandbagged UNSCOM on the U-2 dispute," one former C.I.A. official told me. "They used to spin Deutch up"—that is, raise constant

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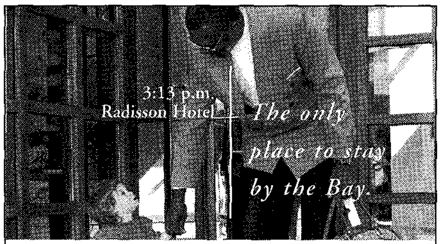

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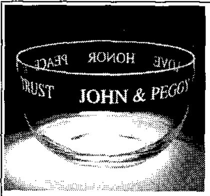

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complaints about UNSCOM's intentions—"and get him to call Ekeus and Lake" with complaints. The D.O. also did not want UNSCOM to get involved with SIGINT at all. "Basically, they went to the Israelis and said, 'Don't help the United Nations'" with signals intelligence. "Why?" The C.I.A. man answered his own question in a bully's tone: "'Iraq is my country. What in the hell are you doing in my country?'"

Richter and his colleagues in the Near East Division had a special reason for resenting UNSCOM's efforts to collect intelligence from within the Special Security Organization. Richter had his own ambitions for Saddam's bodyguard and a second élite Iraqi unit, the Special Republican Guards: he hoped to persuade their leaders to mount, with his help, a coup against Saddam. Scott Ritter's targeting of both groups would inevitably attract the attention of Iraq's relentless counter-intelligence service, and make the C.I.A.'s recruiting job all the more difficult. Ritter and Richter, and the two agencies, were in each other's way.

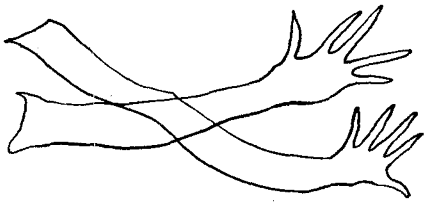
ANOTHER open conflict between Ritter and Richter began with an August, 1995, Israeli intelligence report, provided to Ritter, which revealed that a Russian export company had been bringing Iraq sophisticated gyroscopes—guidance devices, salvaged from ballistic missiles in decommissioned Russian submarines, that could dramatically improve the accuracy of the Iraqi missile fleet. The report, based on intercepted telephone calls and other forms of intelligence, also provided additional evidence that Saddam had managed, despite UNSCOM's efforts, to hide advanced missiles somewhere in Iraq. The gyroscopes had been flown from Russia to Amman, and were picked up there by a Jordanian trucking company, operating on behalf of the Russian merchants, and driven across the border to Baghdad.

"The Israeli SIGINT was hot stuff" and provided invaluable specifics, Ritter recalled—"which flights, which shipments, which crates." At least one shipment of the Russian gyroscopes had been trucked to Baghdad by the time he got the intelligence, Ritter said, and another shipment was en route. UNSCOM had no operational capability inside Jordan, so Ritter turned to the C.I.A. His immediate goal was to get C.I.A. operatives to open the gyroscopes in Jordan and implant beacons—homing devices—that would enable UNSCOM to find the secret site of a long-suspected major missile-assembly plant. The plant could then be targeted for a surprise inspection.

"I went to Richter's people first, and they turned it down," Ritter told me. The stated reason was security: UNSCOM could not be trusted. A former C.I.A. official, asked later about Richter's attitude, confirmed that the Directorate of Operations believed that "any use of Israeli SIGINT"—by Ritter—"was espionage," because Ritter was acting on intelligence supplied by a foreign entity. Ritter had a different explanation for the C.I.A.'s stance. "They were gunning for me," he said, because of his role in getting the U-2 photography into Israeli hands. "From then on, it was war," Ritter said of Richter. "He was always moving in on the UNSCOM intelligence, and I was always beating him back."

Nothing further happened until November, when the Israelis informed Ritter that two shipments of Russian gyroscopes had made their way to Iraq and that several shipments were sitting in a warehouse in Amman, awaiting delivery. Ekeus did more than approve an operation: he sent a fax to one of King Hussein's top advisers, asking for his support. Ritter was then put into the hands of a Jordanian officer who was responsible for the King's secret relations with Israel. A hundred and eighty sets of gyroscopes and test equipment were seized on the eve of their shipment to Baghdad. "It was our 'big victory,'" Ritter told me, recalling that he and his Jordanian colleagues celebrated by prying open one of the gyroscopes and marvelling at its complexity. Ritter's goal, he said, was to persuade UNSCOM's newfound allies in Jordan to permit the next shipment to go into Iraq, but only after at least one beacon had been implanted.

Ritter left Jordan the next morning, and the operation fell apart. A C.I.A. team, Ritter says, claimed the gyroscopes and told the Jordanians that Ritter was untrustworthy. The gyroscopes ended up being shipped to a government laboratory in Suitland, Maryland. In the last weeks of 1995, Ritter said, he returned to his Jordanian contact with a list of Iraqi front companies operating out of Amman and was met with the accusation that he was "crooked." Ritter said he was told that Steven Richter had gone to his contacts in King Hussein's court "and sabotaged the whole thing"—that Richter "lied to the Jordanians." Ritter was subsequently approached by an operative who worked for the C.I.A.'s Non-Proliferation Center, whose mission is to monitor the spread of strategic weapons, and was given an apology for the alleged lies that had been told. In an interview for this article, a former high-level C.I.A. official with direct knowledge of the incident confirmed the gist of Ritter's account. Richter, who had excellent sources in Amman, had learned of Ritter's activity and had been eager "to get Scott out of it," the former official told me. "You have to understand," he added, "the D.O. thinks it can tell people to 'get the hell out of my country.'" Ritter himself says that the C.I.A.'s meddling "killed the use of beacons in gyroscopes."



Ritter struck back. He decided that the moment had come to debrief Iraqi defectors in Jordan on Saddam's weapons-concealment techniques. C.I.A. coup plotting, Ritter knew, was at its peak. "We asked for defector support"—the right to interview defectors—"and the C.I.A. said no," Ritter told me. "But the Jordanian government let us do it. The C.I.A. was pissed, because some of these guys were being used for coup plotting. I asked the defectors to report on organization—how they communicated, their covert cells, the family ties." Ritter understood, he said, that the requests were provocative and poorly timed. "Richter was very angry," he said.

BY early 1996, the UNSCOM office in Baghdad had begun running a burgeoning SIGINT operation in the hope of learning how Saddam's special security apparatus was concealing his weapons program. Ritter and Nikita Smidovich, the Russian arms-control expert in UNSCOM's intelligence unit, fashioned, with Ekeus's approval, an aggressive approach: they would lead a team on a series of surprise inspections and monitor every frequency in the area to "see who's talking to whom." The goal was to find a frequency full of encrypted traffic that was specifically reacting to the

"But that was long ago, before we dipped our bread in olive oil."

UNSCOM inspectors. Once the frequency was found—itself an extremely difficult task—the signal could be recorded and sent off to N.S.A. headquarters, in Fort Meade, Maryland, for decryption and translation. Signals intelligence, if processed quickly and accurately, could help to unravel the Iraqi patterns of concealment and deception, and so make it possible to find the missiles and warheads that the UNSCOM inspectors sensed were being hidden. Eventually, after a few months of collection, Ritter recalled, UNSCOM was presented with the "take" from the intercepts, but much of it consisted of partial transcripts and summaries of Iraqi conversations "in the clear"—that is, unscrambled. There was little evidence of the encrypted conversations. "It was crap," Ritter said. Washington was keeping the good stuff to itself.

UNSCOM's response to the lack of coöperation, Ritter said, was to say, in essence, "Screw the Americans," and to hand over its reels of tapes for processing to the Israelis and to British intelligence, with whom Ritter had established a working relationship. He went on, "I told the Brits, 'You have to understand that the Israelis are players and would share the take.' The Brits said it was up to Rolf." Ekeus gave his approval, Ritter said, but UNSCOM's SIGINT operation—not yet able to decipher encrypted telephone talk—merely "pissed along" until the breakthrough in the spring of 1998. The intelligence being collected, of high quality or not, was doing little to help UNSCOM keep Saddam from amassing a nuclear arsenal.

Ekeus initially refused to discuss details of electronic intelligence with me and warned me that Ritter often "fantasizes" about past events. But when I repeated Ritter's account to him he acknowledged that "much of what Ritter says is true. We had the technology to get Saddam, and we did all the work. We asked the Americans to process it, and they gave us very little—chicken feed. The United States was not prepared to go out on a limb for us."

SOMETIME in 1996, the C.I.A.'s Near East Division, with approval from a high-level authority, had begun a separate, illicit SIGINT operation inside Iraq, sending in teams disguised as UNSCOM inspectors, to install listening devices aimed at Iraqi military movements. The highly secret operation, which was publicly disclosed early this month by Barton Gellman, of the Washington *Post*, used UNSCOM equipment throughout Iraq and UNSCOM office space in Baghdad.

Richter's operation, revolving around a group of defectors from the ruling Ba'thist Party in Iraq, was apparently tied to its efforts to bring about the long-awaited coup, which was scheduled to take place that summer. The plan ended in spectacular failure when one of Saddam's loyal officers contacted the C.I.A. station chief in Amman on a supposedly secure agency communications link and informed him that Saddam knew all the detailed plans of the coup and had rounded up and executed scores of those involved.

Ritter told me that he had eventually learned of the C.I.A.'s spying and had formally notified Charles Duelfer, the senior American in the UNSCOM chain of command. Ritter understood the seriousness of the issue: the C.I.A.'s intelligence-gathering, if it should be uncovered and made public by the Iraqis, would seriously erode UNSCOM's standing inside Iraq and among members of the international arms-control community. Ritter, who had been sharing everything he knew with Ekeus, did not share this discovery with him, and he acknowledges that it was not his finest moment. "I was walking the line between being a good American, which I place above all else, and doing my UNSCOM duties with full integrity," he told me. "I knew that Charles was probably not going to tell Ekeus, but I—perhaps cowardly so—had washed my hands of the affair."

When I talked to Ekeus, he derided "the stupidity of the C.I.A." in using a U.N. arms-control mission as a shield for collecting intelligence. "The political judgment is beyond contempt." He said he feared that the illicit unilateral intelligence-gathering in Iraq would damage future multilateral arms inspection. "How can arms inspectors be trusted?" Ekeus asked. "It makes it difficult to reëstablish arms control."

The collapse of UNSCOM has freed Russia, now the largest purchaser of Iraqi oil, from any constraints on the sale of arms and technology to Iraq. Saddam, with help from Moscow, is once again building up his strategic capabilities and his grandiose plans for domination of the Middle East. One U.S. arms-control expert says of him, "We're looking at a guy whose ambition is not defined by the Manhattan Project"—which produced the two atomic bombs used during the Second World War. Saddam, he said, "wants to match the American and Russian bomb projects" of the Cold War era.

ROLF EKEUS and Scott Ritter are not alone in their complaints about the C.I.A.'s operations in Iraq. The agency's inability to organize an effective coup against Saddam Hussein—Steven Richter's failure—is an open secret in Washington's foreign-affairs community. The major newspapers and the congressional intelligence committees are traditionally chary about publicly identifying senior officials of the Directorate of Operations, but Richter, in part because of his quarrel with Scott Ritter, has become a public figure.

Last October, Richard Perle, a foreign-affairs analyst who served as a high-level Defense Department official during the Reagan Administration, broke with tradition and publicly named Richter during a speech at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative Washington think tank. "Steve Richter," Perle said, "has an unbroken record of mismanagement and incompetence, and yet as far as I can tell there has been no effort whatsoever, with failure following failure, to examine the internal effectiveness" of Richter's organization. Perle concluded that Richter, "the head of the Near East Division at the Central Intelligence Agency, unless he's got a story to tell that justifies his continuation in that job, should be removed on grounds of incompetence and lack of fundamental qualification to hold that position."

Similarly harsh criticism was voiced in interviews with past and present White House and C.I.A. officials. "There is no line drawn in the D.O.," one retired intelligence officer told me. "I've been lied to by Steve Richter." Arms-control concerns about Iraq's having nuclear bombs, he said, "are lost on the D.O." He added, "And we *needed* their support. It was in our interest to take whatever information came along and get it to UNSCOM." The underlying issue is institutional, he said. He urged that an effort be made by the agency's leadership to instill "some ethics" in the Directorate of Operations, "so other people"—in the C.I.A.—"can deal with issues on a basis of knowledge and trust."

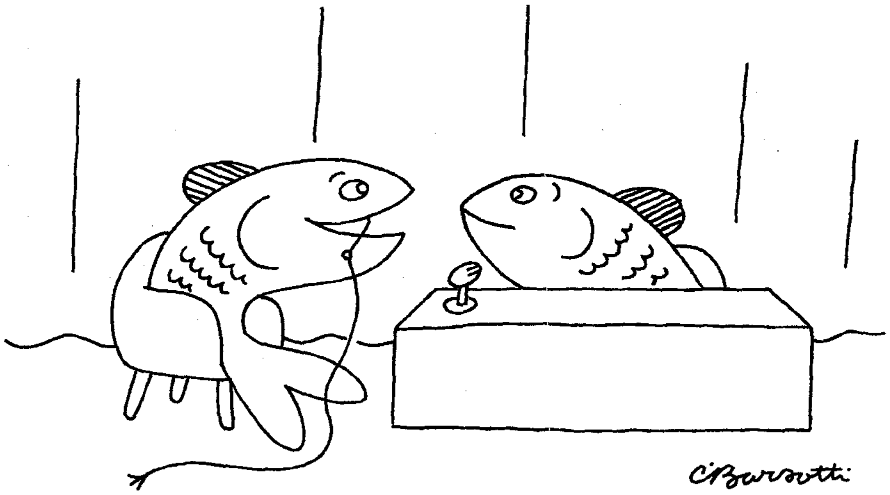
Richter refused a request for an interview, but two of his superiors at C.I.A. headquarters agreed to meet with me to defend their subordinate. "Steve's a tough, no-nonsense officer who does his job well," one official said. "We have a lot of driven people here." The official criticized Perle, saying, "I don't think we should have Richard Perle talking about what he thinks about Richter. Everybody thinks he can do our job better than most." The second official had praise for Scott Ritter, depicting him as a "folk hero" to many in the C.I.A., and described the dispute between Ritter and Richter as being equivalent to "two bulls in a pen." He said he wished that people could "get along or not get along, without it having international ramifications."

SADDAM HUSSEIN, confident after easily outmaneuvering the C.I.A.'s coup plotting, sought in the late summer of 1996 to derail the UNSCOM inspection schedule. Scott Ritter's unit, guided by its electronic intelligence, had targeted a cluster of Hussein's Special Republican Guard facilities that were believed to be shielding strategic materials. UNSCOM was getting close to the real thing, and Saddam provoked another crisis. Ritter's group refused to leave the entrances to inspection sites, and Iraqi guards refused to let them in. Ekeus flew to Baghdad. The White House had told him to get tough: Bill Clinton was ready to bomb. Ritter, in his recently published book "Endgame," depicts the trip as Ekeus's finest moment. Washington "might have intended for Ekeus to be a messenger," Ritter writes, "but Ekeus was his own man and knew that he had a choice: be tough and lose the inspection process altogether, or seek a compromise and keep the inspection regime in place and functioning, even if flawed." He chose compromise, and bombs did not fall. "Ekeus saw a fatal flaw in the Clinton Iraqi policy," Ritter goes on to say. "Like the Bush Administration policy, it had no endgame. The Clinton team was willing to confront Iraq, but to what purpose?"

In an interview, Ekeus told me that one of his major concerns at the time was continued Russian coöperation with the U.N. disarmament process. The Soviet Union and Iraq had been trading partners since the early days of the Cold War, and Iraq owed Moscow at least seven billion dollars for its arms support during the eight-year war with Iran. It was understood by all that if Moscow lost faith in the integrity of UNSCOM it would begin to rearm Saddam. "Of course we had to have Russia satisfied," Ekeus said. "They had to be part of the process."

As head of UNSCOM, Ekeus had successfully balanced concern about Russia, the unceasing pressure from the Clinton Administration, and the inherent risks in the ongoing SIGINT program. Then, in July, 1997, Ekeus resigned from the U.N. to become Sweden's Ambassador to the United States. He says he left behind one urgent recommendation: that UNSCOM "should not continue the SIGINT, because the return was not worth it."

Ekeus was among those who had enthusiastically endorsed Australia's Richard Butler as the new UNSCOM executive chairman. It was, Ekeus told me later, a terrible misjudgment. "Butler lost control," he said. "He did not go into operations, and he wasn't interested in keeping the Iraqis on the defensive." Butler also failed to "see the warning signals" from Russia, Ekeus said. "If the Russians complain, he had to take it seriously." One of Butler's first acts was to formally create a Concealment and Investigations Unit—Ekeus had left matters informal—and put Ritter in charge. Butler also moved Charles Duelfer, the senior American UNSCOM



"Oh, definitely, I feel there's a reason I was given a second chance."

official, onto his management team, and, according to Ritter, began excluding Nikita Smidovich, the experienced Russian, from more sensitive matters. Butler has consistently maintained that he had "no knowledge" of an American turnover of UNSCOM's intelligence operations in Iraq for its own purposes—a statement that was put into question by last December's attempted assassination of Saddam. In an interview, one C.I.A. officer who worked closely with the UNSCOM intelligence operation agreed that Butler, unlike Ekeus, was not up to "challenging" the Administration when it came to Iraqi policy. "He's a great speaker," the C.I.A. man said of Butler, with a shrug.

By the spring of 1998, the C.I.A. had taken Ritter and UNSCOM out of the loop on signals intelligence, but Ritter still had authority, subject to Butler's approval, to initiate inspections anywhere in Iraq, and he continued to do so, with his usual aggressiveness. "That's what finally turned the Administration around on Ritter," a former C.I.A. official told me. "Ritter felt he needed the confrontations to provide intelligence. He wasn't clearing them in advance; he was doing his job. But Sandy Berger and Madeleine Albright"—the national-security adviser and the Secretary of State—"couldn't have their schedules dictated by when Ritter chose to have his confrontations with Iraq."

Butler went along with the decision to rein in Ritter, and within months Ritter resigned. The U.N. inspection process began to unravel in public, and all that Saddam had to do to keep up with the story was to turn on CNN. There were immediate consequences. Intelligence reports began to pour into Washington describing the large volume of Russian arms and technical goods that were being trucked and flown into Iraq. The materials were believed to include spare parts for the surface-to-air missile systems that now defend Iraqi radar sites in the no-fly zones to the north and south of Baghdad, and also more sophisticated gear for Saddam's missile systems.

THE Russian involvement has raised questions in the C.I.A. about Yevgeny Primakov, the Russian Prime Minister, who is considered a potential successor to Boris Yeltsin. Primakov, an Arabist who in 1991 became the head of Russian foreign intelligence, had been posted to the Middle East in the nineteen-sixties as a *Pravda* correspondent, and he became friendly with Saddam Hussein. The two men grew closer after Saddam took over the Iraqi Presidency, in 1979. Just how close they remained became clear in 1996, when Ekeus attempted to enlist the help of Primakov's Foreign Ministry in the gyroscope episode.

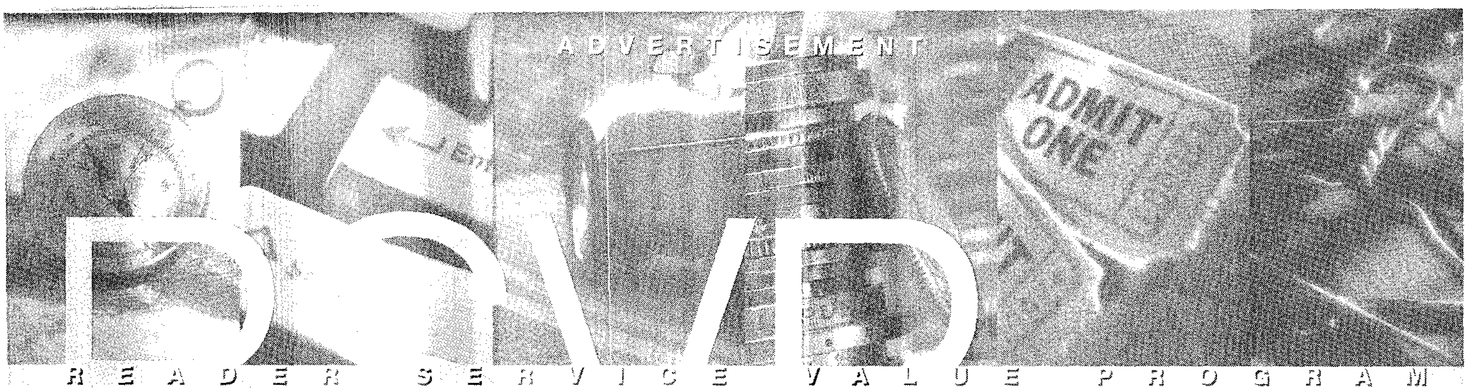
After the C.I.A. upset UNSCOM's effort to intercept the Russian gyroscopes, Ekeus ordered the senior Russian on his staff, Nikita Smidovich, to present Primakov with a complete dossier of Russian front companies that were illegally trucking contraband goods into Iraq. Ekeus also saw to it that Primakov was informed, in writing, of "all the details" of how UNSCOM had learned about the firms—via intercepted telephone calls and other communications. Ekeus told me that he considered the material "proof of Russian smuggling to the Iraqi nuclear program," but Primakov, he said, "insisted that there was no state organization involved"—that the shippers were operating on their own. What happened next, he said, was that "we requested that they conduct their own investigation, and UNSCOM never saw the results of that." In a similar smuggling case involving a direct complaint to Primakov, he added with a wry laugh, "the Russians read the reports and, instead of arresting the guys, they changed their signals."

In November of 1997, the American intelligence community was startled when a British intercept produced evidence of an eight-hundred-thousand-dollar payment to Primakov from Tariq Aziz, Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister. (Britain's signals-intelligence unit shares even its most sensitive intelligence with its colleagues in the National Security Agency, under a liaison agreement dating back to the early days of the Cold War.) "It was a bank transfer that was electronically monitored," one informed source told me. "They scoop these things up like a vacuum cleaner now." It is not clear how the intelligence community was able to identify Primakov as the beneficiary. (It was unlikely that, as a former high-level intelligence official, he would accept Iraqi payoff funds in a named account.) Nonetheless, in interviews with me, two officials who were briefed on the British intercept depicted the information linking the Russian Prime Minister to the Iraqi funds as categorical. "A payment was made," one informed American said. "This is rock solid—like John Gotti ordering a whack on the telephone. Ironclad." A second official similarly recalled the intelligence as being of the highest quality. "There was a wire transfer to an account"—traceable to Primakov—"of eight hundred thousand dollars," the official told me. He added that the report's credibility was heightened by the fact that he and others in the intelligence community had heard "allegations" for years that Primakov "had been paid big time by Iraq."

Intelligence officials said that earlier reports concerning Primakov had been discounted, including a specific allegation in September, 1993, from a secret informer in Moscow that Primakov, then the head of the Russian intelligence service, had received a $1.2-million payment from Iraq. The intelligence had been greeted skeptically at the time because of the unreliability of human sources. Nonetheless, one fully informed C.I.A. official told me, the senior leadership of the agency has "believed for the longest time" that Primakov was "getting payoffs" from the regime of Saddam Hussein. (A spokesman at the Russian Embassy in Washington vehemently denied all charges of corruption on Primakov's part.)

THE current standoff in Iraq, with no inspectors on the scene and American bombs falling daily in the no-fly zones, is a devastating setback for arms control—and the end of the dream for those who joined UNSCOM in the aftermath of the Gulf War. "There was a time when we thought this would provide a model for what you could do," recalled Robert Galluci, dean of Georgetown University's school of foreign service, who served as a deputy to Ekeus in 1991 and 1992. Now, he said, "there is no future for UNSCOM."

"Russia is hopeless now—and maybe even dangerous," a dejected Rolf Ekeus told me. "It's clear that Russia is making a serious effort to control events. Saddam will get a bomb, because these materials are floating in. Every day, they are more advanced." ♦



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1	CO(ME) UPON
8	BASE (2 defs.)
9	ALOHA (hidden)
10	DO + WAGERS
12	P + RIM
14	EAR + P
15	C(HITCH)AT
17	S(M)ITE
18	MIEN (*mean* hom.)
19	PAR + SNIPS

DOWN

1	CRADLE (anag.)
2	O + SLO(w)
3	E SHARP (hidden)
4	PA(PER-TH)IN
5	O + SIR + IS
6	NEWS (*gnu's* hom.)
7	D(OWN)RIVER
11	DAHLIA [(*G*)*ail* + *had* rev.]
12	PAC-MAN (anag.)
13	M(OT)ELS (*to* rev.)
15	CA(M)P
16	A + TO + P

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

IMPORTANT NOTICE OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASE

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

DEAR PARENTS,

This is just to let you know that one of the first graders, Brian Hoopelheimer, has been diagnosed with Coxsackie virus. This may explain why your child has purple spots on his or her hands and feet, or, for that matter, why you have spots on your hands and feet.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We are looking forward to seeing you next week on Ebola Awareness Day!

•

DEAR PARENTS,

We hope that you are all feeling better, now that the Coxsackie virus seems to have run its course. We're delighted that so many of you came in for the delousing workshops last week.

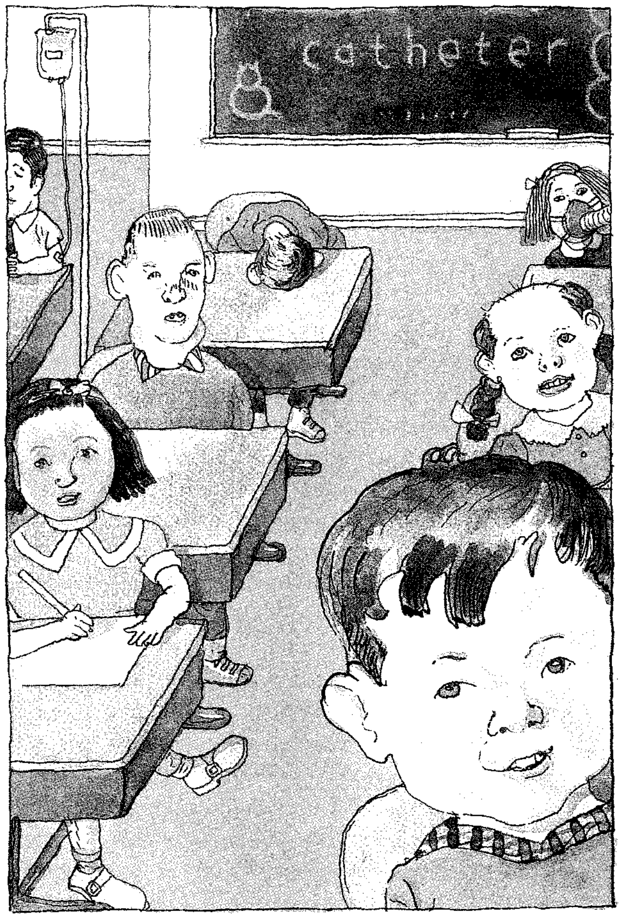
This is to advise you that Joey Rozzini has been diagnosed with thrush. Contrary to popular belief, thrush is not contracted by handling birds of that name or the classroom guinea pig. We don't actually know why they call it that; possibly because it sounds better than "monilial yeast infection." If your child has large white blotches on the roof of his or her mouth, it's either thrush or too many marshmallows.

If you're feeling "up to it," do try to come to assembly this Friday. Dr. Peter Doonan—father of Annie D.—from the Center for Infectious Diseases will be discussing the puzzling recent outbreak of Hansen's disease among second graders. ("Hansen's disease" certainly sounds better than "leprosy"!)

•

DEAR PARENTS,

Thank you for making Whooping Cough Day such a success. The comments were unanimous that this was our best Whooping Cough Day ever.



BARRY BLITT

We have just been notified that Joshua Ng has been diagnosed with roseola. If your child has developed a pinkish rash and is having convulsions, then he or she might be coming down with roseola. Since the incubation period lasts from seven to seventeen days, you might not want to schedule any important presentations or business events over the next month. Shaking violently and scratching yourself raw in front of important clients can certainly "make the wrong impression"!

•

DEAR PARENTS,

Jimmy Lix, one of our fifth graders, has been glowing in the dark. It is not known at this point what the cause of this condition might be. Investigators from the Atomic Energy Commission believe it may be related to his science project, an attempt to develop an alternative energy source for his electric-train set. Jimmy apparently obtained a small quantity of tritium, which is used in nuclear weapons, from an eighth grader who participated in this spring's field trip to Moscow.

A few helpful hints: If your watch or pacemaker stops every time you are in proximity to your child, or if your child has been reading in bed at night with the lights off, then he or she—and you—may be radioactive.

In this event, wrap first your child, then yourself, in lead foil (available from any plumbing-supply store), and drive to the nearest nuclear decontamination center. Also, be sure to affix a large sign to the front and rear of your car that says, "Warning: Hazardous Material!"

P.S.: Home Roentgen Detectors will be available for sale at next week's fourth-grade craft and bake sale.

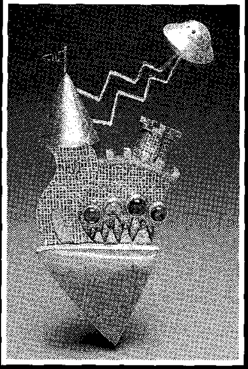
•

DEAR PARENTS,

Greg Zorthian, one of our first graders, is resting comfortably after getting a little too cuddly with Quentin Tarantula, one of our home-room mascots. It seems that Quentin doesn't like to have his tummy rubbed too hard. Please be advised, however, that Quentin seems to have gone missing, or, as he would say in his native Spanish, "*paseando.*" According to the helpful people we spoke with at the National Arachnid Crisis Desk, in Louisiana, tarantulas are natural "hitchhikers," so it is possible that Quentin might have caught a ride home in your child's knapsack. You might want to have a poke around and see if he's under your bed or in the kitchen cupboard.

If you do find Quentin, you can disorient him temporarily with a quick blast from a fire extinguisher. Or, if Dad is feeling game, he can try to coax him into a glass jar with a dead mouse or any handy household arthropod.

Remember: Monday is Black Death Day. Should be lively! ♦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PROFILE

LORD OF THE FLIES

What one of the century's great unsung scientists has discovered about bugs, genes, and us.

BY JONATHAN WEINER

THE last time I saw the biologist Seymour Benzer, he was hiding from reporters in his office at the California Institute of Technology, in Pasadena. His laboratory runs along two corridors on the second floor of Church Hall, and his office is at the corner where the corridors meet. When I walked in, he was on the phone arranging for Caltech's public-relations office to block his outside calls. "The *methuselah* thing," he told me. Benzer had just published a report, in *Science,* about a mutant fruit fly that lives for approximately a hundred days—about forty days longer than a normal fly. Now science reporters were calling Benzer as if he had discovered the Fountain of Youth. Since the year was almost over, I asked him if he was going away for the holidays. "I don't want to travel right now," he said. "To me, getting back into the lab would be enough of an adventure."

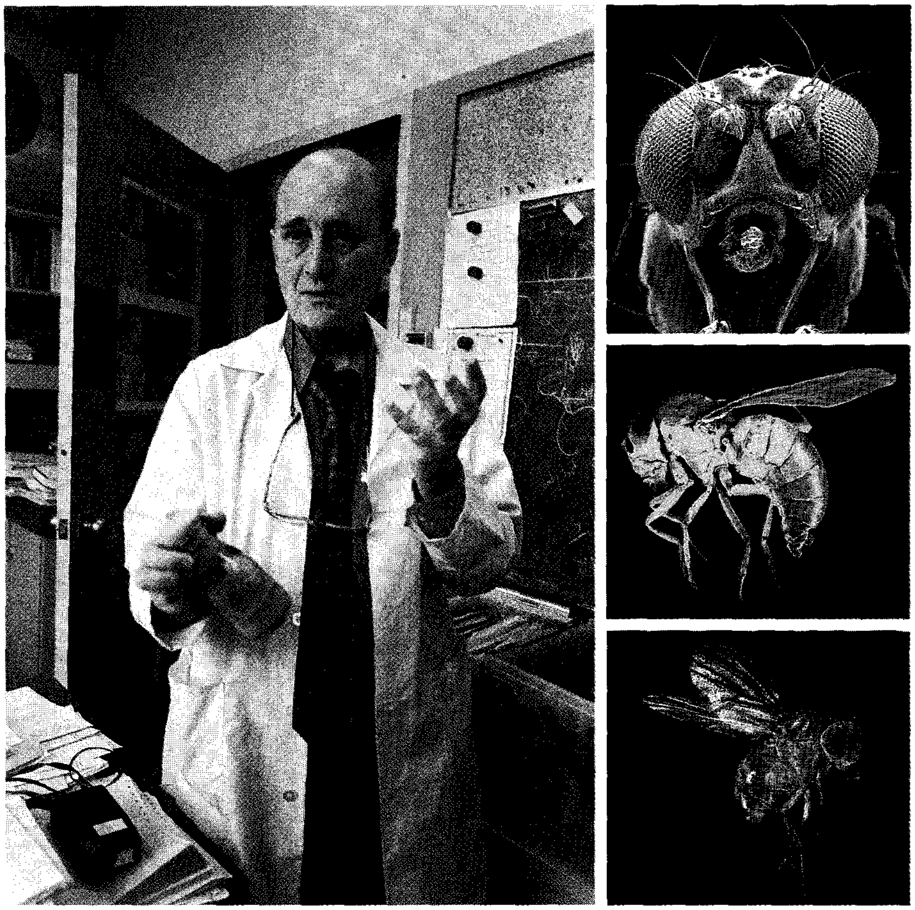
Benzer, who is seventy-seven years old, has always tried to keep himself far from the public eye. He started out, in the early forties, as a physicist, and his experiments with semiconductors helped lead to the invention of the transistor. Working as a biologist, in the fifties, he made the world's first detailed map of the interior of a gene, which helped launch the science of molecular biology. And a research program he began at his laboratory in Pasadena in the sixties—a program that is, like Benzer himself, both whimsical and serious—is now central to the study of genes and behavior. He is one of the least known and least vain of the century's great scientists, with a genius for simple experiments that open new fields.

Late one night a few years ago, Benzer, who keeps an owl's hours, led me into the laboratory next to his office and showed me his first behavior experiment, which he had performed at Caltech in 1965. Since then, the room hadn't changed much. One wall held little bins that Benzer had labelled in a spidery black script: "Lenses," "Mirrors," "Toothpicks," "Pipe Cleaners"—anything for an experiment in the middle of the night, including "Teeth (Human and Shark)."

As I watched, Benzer laid a fifteen-watt light bulb on a bench top and turned it on. Next to it he put a half-pint milk bottle made of heavy, scratched glass with scrolls of antique advertising ("5¢—Just a Little Better") and a foam-rubber plug. Inside the bottle was a madding crowd of *Drosophila melanogaster*—fruit flies. Benzer unplugged the bottle and dumped the flies into an apparatus that he had designed in the sixties, a collection of test tubes bound together in molded plastic. He turned out the overhead lights, put on his reading glasses, and leaned forward to see what the flies would do.

Most of the flies set out through the glass tunnels toward the glow of the light bulb—some running, some walking, some meandering. A few stayed put. Benzer repeated the experiment five times, and the flies, by their own journeys through the test tubes, sorted themselves neatly into groups. Flies that chose the light every time reached Tube 5. Flies that chose the light four times ended up in Tube 4. One lone fly that never chose the light remained right where it started, in Tube Zero. Benzer, who looks unusually young and energetic for his age but whose manner is sometimes modest to the point of self-effacement, watched without expression. "O.K., there we are" was all he said as he switched on the overhead lights.

SEPARATING the light-loving flies from the dark-loving flies had launched Benzer on his greatest scientific adventure: a study of the ways that differences in genes can lead to differences in behavior. He was fascinated by the infinite variety of human nature, and he decided to begin his quest by examining the far more primitive behavior of *Drosophila*, an insect that is not much bigger than an asterisk. Using his light-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel device and other gadgets, Benzer searched for flies with aberrant instincts—flies with normal-looking bodies but bizarre lives. In the years that followed, he and his students discovered an astonishing number of genes that may illuminate aspects of human nature. Their findings include everything from the *methuselah* gene—which may help biologists understand what sets the span of human life—to genes involved in sleep disorders, memory problems, and neurodegenerative diseases. Indeed, so many fly genes have turned out to be like ours that one fly researcher calls flies "little people with wings."



Flies have feelings, too: Seymour Benzer at Caltech, and three views of Drosophila, the common fruit fly. Portrait by Elliot Erwitt.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: MAGNUM; O. MECKES/PHOTO RESEARCHERS; CNRI-SPL/PHOTO RESEARCHERS; D. DALE/PHOTO RESEARCHERS

Benzer's pioneering work with flies has put him at the center of one of the most controversial issues in science: the extent to which our genes shape who we are and what we do. The issue has been most sharply joined at Harvard, where two of the world's leading evolutionary biologists—Richard Lewontin and Edward O. Wilson—have taken opposing stands. Lewontin, who in 1984 co-wrote an influential polemic called "Not in Our Genes," believes that studies of the genes of flies, worms, mice, or even human beings, don't tell us much about human behavior. He thinks we are essentially creatures of culture, not instinct. Wilson, on the other hand, told me he believes that the study of genes and behavior is beginning to revitalize the battered field of psychology—indeed, that it will one day enable us to understand human nature from the ground up. "Better Benzer than Freud!" Wilson said. "Quote me. Better Benzer than Freud!"

Although Benzer refuses to enter the debate, he keeps a human brain in a plastic bucket of formaldehyde in his lab—a reminder of his conviction that the genes in his fruit flies do relate to the genes in the bucket. "Psychology," he tells me in his low-key way, "is going to be changed."

THE modern theory of the gene came out of the first fly room—No. 613 Schermerhorn Hall, at Columbia University. There, in the early decades of this century, the biologist Thomas Hunt Morgan bred mutant fruit flies—flies with yellow bodies instead of brown ones, vermillion eyes instead of red ones, curly wings instead of straight ones—and he watched each trait pass down through generations of flies, in hundreds and hundreds of half-pint milk bottles. Morgan was repeating and extending the work that the Austrian monk Gregor Mendel had done in the eighteen-fifties with garden peas. Mendel had bred strains of plants with smooth peas and wrinkled peas, with short stems and tall stems, and so on. He had concluded that each trait in every living creature is governed by a separate factor. But Mendel did not know what—or where—those factors might be.

More than half a century later, Morgan found part of the answer. He discovered that genes are situated on tiny threads called chromosomes, which can be seen, through a microscope, in the nucleus of every egg, in the head of every spermatozoon, and in every living cell. Morgan named the first gene he found *white*, because he had discovered it in a mutant fly with white eyes. He and his students, who became known as "Morgan's Raiders," traced the *white* gene to a microscopic point on the fly's X chromosome, with *yellow* just to the left of it and *vermilion* just to the right. It was the first gene map, and it was a simple one—just a few points on a straight line.

Morgan's research had a certain madcap tone—a tone that Benzer later revived. In Morgan's fly room, escaped flies drifted around a garbage can that was never completely emptied. Other flies swarmed around a bunch of bananas that hung in a corner. The Raiders arrived for work each morning bearing empty milk bottles that—legend has it—they had stolen from Manhattan stoops. "Morgan was a bit crazy," one of Benzer's former students, the drosophilist Jeff Hall, told me. "He used to say, 'To know your organism, you must eat it.' Not just the flies but also the pupae. And not just to horrify people but to *know*. When people stared at him, he said, 'They taste like Grape-Nuts.' "

Eventually, Morgan moved his operation to Caltech, which had become one of the world's great research centers for chemistry and physics. In a Nobel Prize lecture, in 1934, he noted that his genetic maps were purely schematic. He still wanted to know what genes are made of, and how they work, and he hoped that physicists would tell him.

THAT same year, in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, Seymour Benzer was given a microscope as a bar-mitzvah present. He took it down to the family basement, where he had built a laboratory. There he performed what seemed to him the obvious first experiment: he used his new microscope to survey hundreds of thousands of thrashing tadpoles with tiny heads—his sperm.

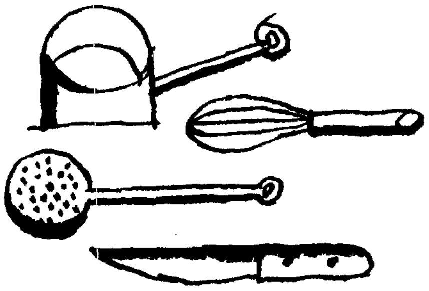
No one else in the Benzer family was interested in science. His parents had come to America from a shtetl west of Warsaw; in New York, they worked in the needle trades. But Seymour was the only boy in the family—he was the prince, "the egg with two yellows," to use an Old World expression—and on most afternoons and evenings his parents and his three sisters left him free to play stickball on the street or to putter in the basement, striking mad-scientist poses and staring through his microscope at deconstructed houseflies. At fifteen, he won a Regents Scholarship and entered Brooklyn College. In those days, the typical introductory biology course was closer to natural history than to physics and chemistry: it was a survey of all the plants and animals on earth. Benzer asked to skip to more advanced classes, but that was against the rules of the biology department. "So," he recalls, "being a stupid, pigheaded, cocky young guy, I told them the hell with it, and didn't take any biology at all."

Instead, he studied physics and chemistry. In 1942, just as the United States was entering the Second World War, he enrolled as a graduate student in the physics department at Purdue University, in Indiana. There, in a secret wartime laboratory, he and a small team of physicists worked on radar technology. At the time, radar sets used rectifiers made of silicon, a semiconductor. Because these rectifiers were unreliable—when high voltage hit them, they burned out—Purdue's team was trying to replace silicon with germanium, another semiconductor. Benzer discovered a germanium crystal that could withstand extremely high voltages. After the war, the crystal was used at Bell Labs to build the first transistor.

In 1946, a friend at Purdue gave Benzer a copy of "What Is Life?," a little book by the Austrian quantum physicist Erwin Schrödinger. The book contained speculations on the physical nature of the gene by the German quantum physicist Max Delbrück. For Benzer and a whole generation of other young scientists—including James Watson, in Chicago, and Francis Crick, in London—the experience of reading this slender volume turned the gene into the great unsolved mystery of biology. When Benzer learned that Delbrück, who was now at Caltech, had organized a summer course at the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, on Long Island, he signed up.

"Within one day at Cold Spring Harbor," Benzer later recalled, "I became committed to being a biologist." After he and his wife, Dotty, returned to Purdue in the fall, he announced that he was changing fields. "People thought I was nuts," he says. "Here it was, the semiconductor thing was booming. My boss, Karl Lark-Horovitz, and I had got six patents on the work we had done with the semiconductor." Most of Benzer's Purdue colleagues were planning to form electronics companies and get rich. But Benzer told them matter-of-factly, "I'm interested in biology."

IN his early years as a biologist, Benzer lived like a gypsy. He worked with Delbrück at Caltech, then with François Jacob and Jacques Monod at the Pasteur Institute, in Paris. In the fall of 1953—the year that Watson and Crick put together their double-helix model of the spiralling molecule of DNA, which is the main constituent of every chromosome—he was back in Indiana, in his lab at Purdue. Although Benzer was nominally a professor of physics, he had taken to spending most of his time experimenting with viruses and bacteria. He was not trying to understand the viruses and bacteria themselves; rather, he was using them as tools to discover the physical nature of the gene, studying heredity in the simplest forms of life. Flies are tiny, but viruses are submicroscopic. Benzer later wrote that in a test tube, in twenty minutes, he could conduct "an experiment yielding a quantity of genetic data that would require, if humans were used, the entire population of the earth." One day that fall, he realized that by manipulating virus particles he could, in a sense, get inside the gene. The result would be a manifold expansion of Morgan's genetic maps—like magnifying a painting by Seurat until he could map the terrain of a single dot. Among other things, a map as detailed as that would help to confirm that Watson and Crick were right about the double helix.



After much thought, Benzer wrote out a sketch of his plans. During a meeting in Amsterdam in 1954, he showed the sketch to his old mentor, Max Delbrück. Delbrück found it outrageous. Benzer cherishes the comments that Delbrück scribbled on his manuscript: "You must have drunk a triple highball before writing this. This is going to be offensive to a lot of people that I respect."

Actually, like all of Benzer's experiments, this one was ingeniously simple. He focussed on a chromosome region called rII, and over the next ten years he discovered so much about it that his map grew into a mural that stretched across his lab. It was the first fine-scale map of a gene's interior. Biologists of a certain age can still remember the impression that Benzer made with his map at conferences in the fifties, carrying it onstage and unrolling it like a Torah scroll. Today, the map work that Benzer began has become even more detailed—indeed, has reached the bedrock molecular level—and is the single biggest project in the history of biology. International teams of molecular biologists are competing to map and read every fly gene and every human gene, at a cost of billions of dollars and at rates of more than a hundred million new letters of genetic code a year.

Benzer's reputation as a pioneer in biology was enhanced among his friends by his eccentricities. He always wore many layers of clothing; he did his best work in the middle of the night; and he amazed them by the things he ate. François Jacob, of the Pasteur Institute, describes Benzer in his memoirs: "Every day, at lunch, he brought some unusual dish—cow's udder, bull's testicles, crocodile tail, filet of snake—which he had unearthed on the other side of Paris and which he simmered on his Bunsen burner." Benzer ate like that at home, too, with the indulgence of Dotty, who watched as he sampled caterpillars, ducks' feet, horse meat, and snails. One morning in Paris, their daughter Barbie woke up with her eyes swollen shut. When the doctor asked, "Has she eaten anything unusual lately?" Benzer was almost too mortified to be truthful.

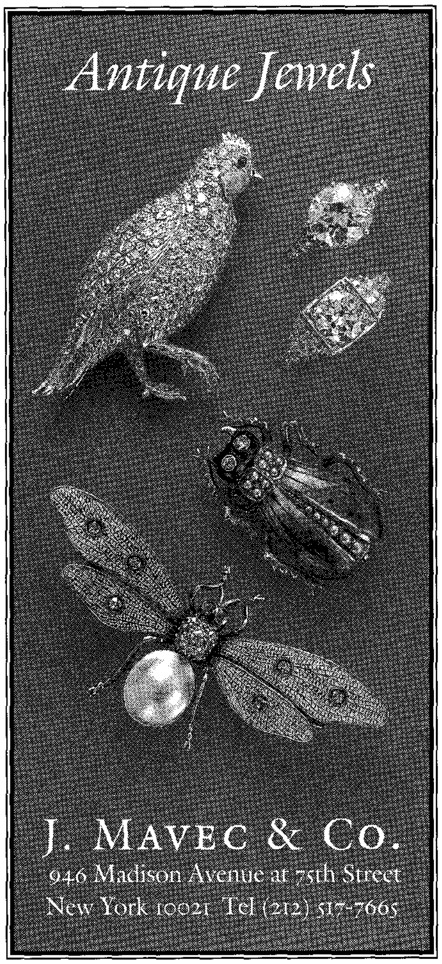
By the early sixties, molecular biologists had learned so much about the gene that they doubted whether they would ever encounter any further mysteries to equal the ones they had dispelled. Benzer says, "It was a little bit like the physicists at the end of the nineteenth century saying, 'All we have left to do is find one more decimal place.'"

Shortly after his fortieth birthday, Benzer's curiosity took another turn. He, Dotty, and their two young daughters, Barbie and Martha, often spent time in Cold Spring Harbor. At the beach, Benzer was struck by how unlike the two girls were as they played by the water's edge: Barbie was so lively, Martha was so calm. Martha had been placid since her first week in the crib. He didn't think that he and his wife could possibly have made that much difference in the temperaments of the two girls—the difference had to be in the genes. It occurred to him that whenever he read something about rII he felt bored, but whenever he read or talked about behavior and personality he felt engaged. He was using what Crick calls "the gossip test"—that is, "what you are really interested in is what you gossip about."

So Benzer began preparing for his next career jump. He knew that scientists and philosophers had argued forever about "nature versus nurture"—generations of thinkers trapped like flies in a fly bottle, pirouetting around and around. But now they had a solid foundation from which to work—the gene. Now they could try to trace the connections between the gene and the brain, and between the brain and behavior. Benzer asked Dotty to buy brains at the butcher's shop: sheep, cow, goat, pig, and chicken. One by one, she brought them home, and one by one he dissected them, usually in the middle of the night. Afterward, he ate them.

In 1965, Benzer went to Caltech as a visiting researcher, still looking for the right animal with which to start his new study. By chance, his lab was a short distance from what had been Morgan's last fly room. Although Morgan had died in 1945, his collected works still sat in rows of file cabinets out in the hall. Morgan's favorite Raider, Alfred Sturtevant, who had followed Morgan to Caltech, was retired now, but one of his students, Ed Lewis, had inherited the old fly room, along with thousands of mutant flies and the milk bottles. One night, Benzer stopped by the fly room and borrowed a few test tubes and a fly bottle. He put a small light bulb on his bench top, turned out the overhead lights, and watched the flies run toward the light.

In the late sixties and early seventies, Benzer gathered a remarkable group of graduate and postdoctoral students around him—Benzer's Raiders. His friend Francis Crick told me that without Benzer's enormous success in molecular biology he could never have drawn students into such a wildly improbable research program. "If he hadn't done it," Crick says, "no one else would have done it." Benzer's Raiders worked in the middle of the night, rambling from fly room to fly room in Church Hall, and sampling—sometimes vomiting—an assortment of snacks: haggis, century eggs, fish lips, all of which Benzer insisted on sharing whenever he and his students paused for what he called "tearing a herring." William Harris, who was a graduate student of Benzer's in those early days and who is now chairman of the Department of Anatomy at Cambridge, recalls, "The whole lab was



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infected by his spirit of the unusual.”

The light-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel apparatus was the prototype for a series of experiments in which Benzer and his Raiders looked for mutant instincts and mutant behavior among the flies. To insure that they would find plenty of mutants, they fed their specimens a mutagen—a poison called ethyl methane sulfonate—that will generally change only one letter of the genetic code at a time.

Their first breakthrough came in a study of the flies' sense of time. Naturalists had suspected for centuries that living things carry built-in clocks. Morning glories know when to bloom. Bears in caves know when to wake up. Many people can successfully order themselves to wake up at seven o'clock in the morning. Benzer, who tended to wake up around noon, had always suspected that he had a mutant clock in him—a mutation that helped him spend many nights of happy solitude in his lab.

Fruit flies are early risers. (*Drosophila* means “lover of dew.”) In Benzer's fly room, they stick to their daily cycle even if they are put in a room that is dark around the clock. At the hour of their virtual sunrise, they begin moving around more or less simultaneously. They take naps in the middle of their day. They get quiet again at their virtual sundown. Fruit flies hatch—or, in the jargon, eclose—at dawn. “They're very endearing when they first come out,” Benzer says. “Moist and vulnerable. And all that behavior is built in!”

In 1968, Benzer and one of his first graduate students at Caltech, Ronald J. Konopka, isolated a strain of flies that neither eclosed nor awakened at dawn. Their hours were completely unpredictable; they were clock mutants. Benzer and Konopka also found a strain of flies whose clocks ran about five hours fast, and then a strain whose clocks ran four or five hours slow. All three mutants turned out to have something wrong with a single gene, which Benzer and Konopka named *period*. At a party in Pasadena, Benzer and Konopka told Max Delbrück that they had found a mutant fly that had something wrong with its sense of time, and they had traced the gene to the fly's X chromosome.

“I don't believe it,” Delbrück said.

PRIVATE EYE

To find clues where there are none,
That's my job now, I said to the
Dictionary on my desk. The world beyond
My window has grown illegible,
And so has the clock on the wall.
I may strike a match to orient myself.

In the meantime, there's the heart-
Stopping hush as the building
Empties, the elevators stop running,
The grains of dust stay put.
Hours of quiescent sleuthing
Before the Madonna with the mop

Shuffles down the long corridor
Trying doorknobs, turning mine.
That's just little old me sweating
In the customer's chair, I'll say.
Keep your nose out of it.
I'm not closing up till he breaks.

—CHARLES SIMIC

“But, Max,” Benzer said, “we found the gene!”

“I don't believe a word of it,” Delbrück said.

Still, Benzer knew he was right.

He and his students also looked at flies' instincts for courtship and copulation. Put a virgin male and a virgin female fruit fly in a vial, and the action runs much the same course again and again: even if the male has never seen a female fly before, he seems to experience, as Benzer puts it, “an immediate 'Aha!' reaction.” Within seconds, he maneuvers himself so that he is facing her head from one side. Then he holds out one wing toward her in a kind of salute, and sets it vibrating. Hurrying around to her other side, he holds out his other wing toward her and vibrates that: second verse, same as the first. Working in his lab at night, Benzer could just hear the flies' “Eine Kleine Nachtmusik” if he lowered his ear to an open vial. If a male fly sang the right song and if the female was a virgin, then the rest of the action proceeded in a distinctive series of steps that were, as Benzer puts it, “only too embarrassingly anthropomorphic.” Typically, copulation lasted twenty minutes.

To begin the genetic dissection of these instincts, Benzer encouraged Jeff Hall, then a postdoctoral student, to collect flies that were luckless in love. One such mutant had turned up in a fly room at the University of California in San Diego. The male courted vigorously but never copulated. Hall named it *celibate*. From the same fly room he acquired a male mutant that disengaged after ten or twelve minutes and rarely fathered any children. Hall named him *coitus interruptus*. Then there was *stuck*. A *stuck* male has trouble withdrawing his penis after copulation. “The pair just stick together,” Benzer says, “and they keep pulling against each other for hours or days on end. Sometimes they die of starvation.”

In a fly bottle, normal males ignore other males. If a male sees another male approaching him with a wing out, in troubadour style, he flicks his own wings violently in rejection. But Hall acquired a strain of mutants from a fly room at Yale in which the males sang to each other. Sometimes three males—or five, or ten, or more—would form chains and follow each other around in the bottom of a petri dish in long, winding conga lines. When they had reached a certain pitch of frenzy, they would get right up on the walls of the petri dish and keep chaining for hours. The male flies never tried to copulate. They only formed these long lines and danced, sometimes sticking out one wing and singing the love song, as if they were shaking a tambourine. Hall and others managed to map the gene; they named it *fruitless*.

Meanwhile, Benzer was trying to figure out how to study events in the brain which lead to learning and memory. With another postdoc, Chip Quinn, he set out to see if fruit flies could learn. The two added scents to the light-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel apparatus. When the flies entered a tube scented with octanol—which to human noses smells vaguely like licorice—they experienced a shock of seventy volts. When they entered a tube scented with methylcyclohexanol—which smells, as someone in the lab put it, “a lot like tennis shoes in July”—the flies made their way toward the light at the end of the tunnel without receiving a shock. Quinn ran whole schools of flies through this teaching machine. Each mistake cost the fly fifteen seconds of seventy volts, which might have killed a human being but only ruffled the fly’s bristles. After a while, when the flies encountered a fresh test tube that smelled like licorice, most of them did not go inside.

Soon after, another student of Benzer’s discovered a strain of flies that had no talent for learning. These flies ran to the light, and climbed the walls; they flew, walked, courted, sang, and copulated like normal flies. But they never seemed to learn. Benzer’s Raiders named the new mutant *dunce*.

IN the seventies and eighties, Benzer’s students began wandering out into the world to start fly rooms of their own. For molecular biology, the mutant fly known as *period* became a point of entry into the sense of time. In the last few years, the molecular model of the clock has grown ornate, as more mutants—with such names as *timeless* and *doubletime*—have been discovered. Often the discovery of a gene in the fly has led straight to its discovery in human beings, because key sequences in both genetic codes are very much alike. It seems that we human beings have *period* genes, and *timeless* genes, too. Moreover, our clocks apparently work so much like fly clocks that, in laboratory tests, some of our protein gears mesh perfectly with the flies’ gears, like parts of the same watch—even though human beings and flies have not shared an ancestor since the Cambrian Period, six hundred million years ago.

Molecular biologists who breed fruit flies have also helped trace genetic events that decide the sex of an embryo—any embryo, from a fly’s to a human being’s. And in recent years Benzer’s students have discovered more learning and memory genes, including *latheo*, which is named after Lethe, the river in Hades that caused souls to forget their pasts, and *linotte*, which is named after the French expression *tête de linotte*, or “birdbrain.” At the moment, the most intensely studied memory gene is *creb*, which gives a fly the genetic equivalent of an on-and-off switch. A few years ago, in Cold Spring Harbor, researchers engineered a fly whose switch was jammed “on.” This fly learned its lessons unnaturally fast and remembered them for a whole week. The genetic engineers had given the fly the equivalent of a photographic memory.

DOTTY BENZER died of cancer in the spring of 1978. Benzer, who was despondent, decided to drop his own work on behavior, and let his students carry on. A few of them still feel abandoned. “Well, I’d jumped before,” Benzer told me, and he added, “You know the song,” referring to a celebration party for Max Delbrück when he won the Nobel Prize, in 1969. On that occasion, one of Benzer’s friends sang a song about him to the tune of “Jimmy Crack Corn.” Three verses mapped the Benzer career:

Physics was fun but I don’t care,
I’m on to something else next year,
I must stick with the new frontier
Until I’m old and gray.

Genetics was fun but I don’t care,
I’m on to something else next year,
I must stick with the new frontier
Until I’m old and gray.

Behavior was fun but I don’t care,
I’m on to something else next year,
I must stick with the new frontier
Until I’m old and gray.

Although the song was sung with great affection, a few of Benzer’s friends sometimes wonder if all this career hop-

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ping has cost him a Nobel of his own.

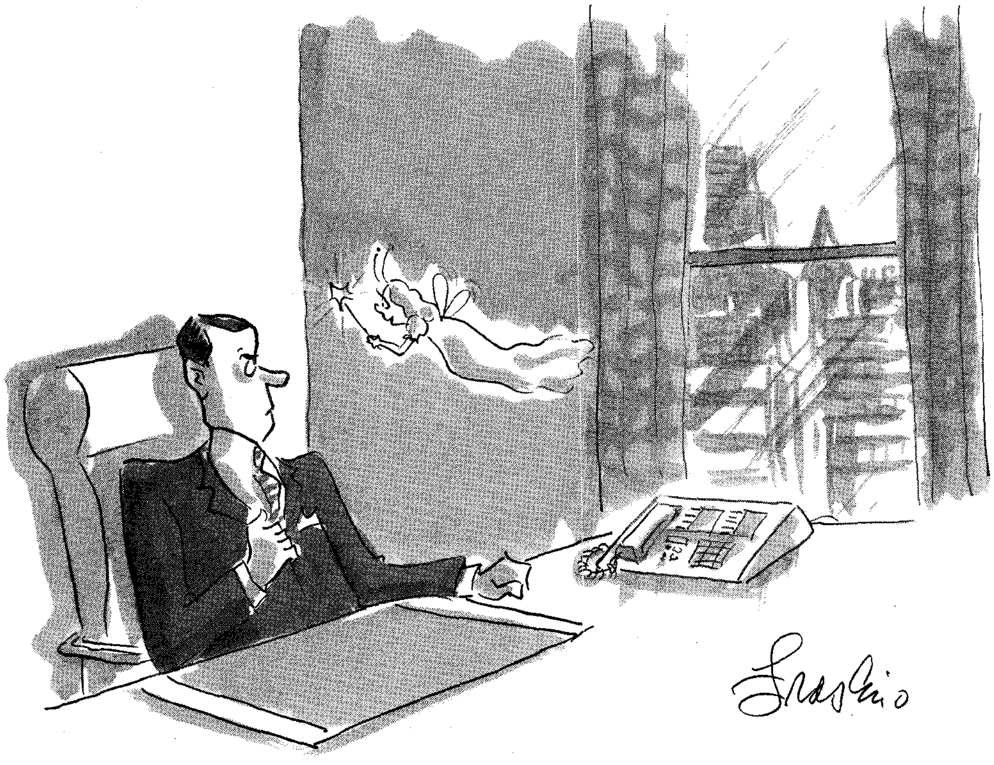
In the fall of 1978, Benzer met Carol Miller, a neuropathologist at the University of Southern California School of Medicine. She was seventeen years younger than Benzer, and to him she looked like the woman in Vermeer's "Girl with a Pearl Earring." They soon discovered that they shared an obsession with the machinery of the brain and enjoyed the same sorts of novelties, such as a plastic brain with a compass in it, a plastic eyeball key chain, and a brain-shaped Jello mold. Benzer was dissecting fly eyes and brains; Miller was dissecting human eyes and brains. He would tell her about the bizarre mutant fly he had found that week. She would say, "That sounds like the patient I saw yesterday."

They married in 1980, and embarked on what Miller says is a true marriage of minds and brains. She adapted some of the high-tech tools he had developed in the study of defective fly brains, and used them in her research lab to study tissue samples from the brains of victims of Parkinson's, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease), Alzheimer's, and other neurodegenerative diseases. Lately, Benzer and one of his postdocs have been screening mutant flies and searching for brain-degeneration patterns that look like the ones in Miller's neuropathology textbooks. A surprising number of fly brains and human brains have problems that look alike when they're inspected under an electron microscope. Whenever Benzer finds a particularly interesting case, he tells Miller about it over dinner at their modest home in San Marino, a few minutes' drive from Caltech. The front door has a stained-glass window in which fly eyes and fly brains are disguised as flowers. A reproduction of "Girl with a Pearl Earring" hangs in the living room. They have a fourteen-year-old son, Alexander, and Benzer used to carry a picture of the boy's chromosomes in his wallet.

Occasionally, Benzer and Miller meet for lunch in his fly room. During the meal, Benzer's postdoc shows them photographs of fly brains. Then Benzer's Raiders name the latest fly mutants after the foods that the flies' brain lesions remind them of: *eggroll*, *popcorn*, *sponge cake*, *bubblegum*, *meringue*, *chocolate chip*.

THE retired Senator William Proxmire used to give out Golden Fleece awards to scientists who, in his view, were wasting the taxpayers' money on ridiculous research projects. Benzer once heard a rumor that he was a Golden Fleece nominee for his fly work. Today, if Richard Lewontin were to revive the award, he might nominate Benzer, too. I visited Lewontin at Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology, where he studies flies not to understand their behavior but to understand evolution—the ways that the pressures of natural selection change the lines of the genetic code in flies, fish, or human beings. Over lunch, Lewontin maintained that Benzer and his students have found nothing in the fly that matters for the man and woman on the street. "Always the same story," he told me, in a world-weary tone. "You take a simple organism because it is simpler to study, but you factor out everything that's interesting in the process. In terms of *Drosophila*, in terms of the evolution of its courtship, the work is interesting. But it's like saying that someone has understood why I eat what I am eating because of smell perception in fruit flies." He smiled. His choice of this particular lunch, he said, did not originate in his genes. "I'm eating it because of my social position in this culture, and what's available, and what lunch I got to eat when I was a kid." In other words, this was a lunch that was not typical of his species. "Most people in the world," he said, "don't eat pizza and cookies."

One flight up in the same building, Benzer's great defender, Edward O. Wilson, told me that he finds Lewontin's argument irrelevant. "Science consists substantially of finding an entry point," he said. "And even a small advance following a breakthrough should be regarded as science of the first class. What's unreasonable is then to demand that the people who are doing the very early work come up with a whole explanation of everything. That's crazy." In Wilson's recent book "Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge," he argues that science is beginning to piece together one "consilient" or interconnected picture of nature that includes everything from dead atoms to warm, living flesh. He sees no reason to doubt that, through the sort of work that



"Three wishes less commission."

Benzer is doing, we will one day be able to extend the reach of scientific explanation to the behavior of even the most complex organisms, including human beings.

For all of Benzer's open-field explorations, he has always been a skeptical scientist. In Church Hall, he keeps a file of headlines pertaining to genes and behavior, so that if their claims are discredited he can use them in his lectures as cautionary tales. Over the last three decades, scientists have claimed to have found in human beings genetic links to all sorts of aberrant behavior—everything from a propensity for violence to reading disabilities, manic depression, psychosis, alcoholism, autism, drug addiction, gambling addiction, attention-deficit disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and Tourette's syndrome. Many of those studies have turned out to be shaky, and some have been retracted.

Today, as the human genome is mapped and deciphered, more and more molecular biologists are gambling that the time is right to plunge in. Dean Hamer, of the National Institutes of Health, is one of the best known of the molecular biologists who have begun looking at the links between genes and behavior in human beings. Since 1993, Hamer's studies have produced headlines announcing the discovery of a "gay gene," a "novelty gene," and a "happiness gene."

Benzer knows that this is a field he helped to pioneer, but, like many other molecular biologists, he finds the headlines overblown and oversimplified. He is convinced that as the picture of genes and their relation to behavior becomes more complete, such traits will prove to be at least as complicated as a fly's tendency to move toward light. He has now dissected that trait into hundreds of genes and components, going from the retina deep into the brain. Even though a fly brain is so small that it is hard to see without a magnifying glass, it contains more than a hundred thousand neurons. Why, Benzer asks, should we imagine that our turnings are less complicated than a fly's?

"We have a dog, a golden retriever named Cassandra," Benzer told me recently. "Her behavior is right on target—such sweetness bred into the breed!" Still, every time he takes Cassandra for a walk along the palm-lined side streets of San Marino, he can't help wondering at all the ways in which the dog's genes and her environment interact. "The only way to tease genes and environment apart," he says, "is to keep the environment constant and change the genes. But I never say that it's *all* in the genes. Genetics can be used as a tool to attack the problem of nature versus nurture—with proper control. Nowadays, though, the pendulum has swung too far in the direction of nature. You pick out a dog based on breed, but then you sure as hell try to train it."

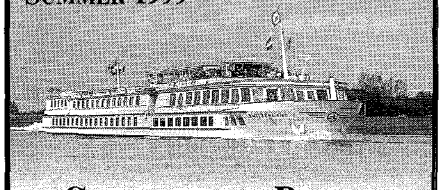
A FEW days after Benzer's seventy-seventh birthday, last October, he and his latest crew of postdocs announced their discovery of *methuselah*—the mutant fly that lives a hundred days. Now Benzer is using *methuselah* to search for a sort of clock of clocks, whose hands can help set each lifespan. "Time again—time revisited," he says of his latest inquiry, which he expects to pursue well into the next century.

In his "Philosophical Investigations," in 1953, Ludwig Wittgenstein asked, "What is your aim in philosophy?" He answered the question himself: "To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle." Well, the fly is out of the bottle now. When Benzer switched from physics to genetics, he thought of a fly as simply a particle, an atom of behavior. Now that he has spent a third of a century getting inside the brain of the fly, he would not dream of calling it merely an atom of behavior.

His research on *methuselah* interests him so much that sometimes he would rather work than sleep. In the middle of the night in Church Hall, he unhoods a microscope to examine the head of a fly. "About the size of the head of a pin," he says. "A hundred thousand angels on it. Dancing." ♦

Michelle Birchler, director of art at Mt. St. Dominic Academy in Caldwell, conducts a class in advanced art. Birchler, her four sisters, mother and four aunts will be indicted into the school's Hall of Fame this month.—*Photo caption in the Newark (N.J.) Star-Ledger.*

They plan to throw themselves on the mercy of the art critics.



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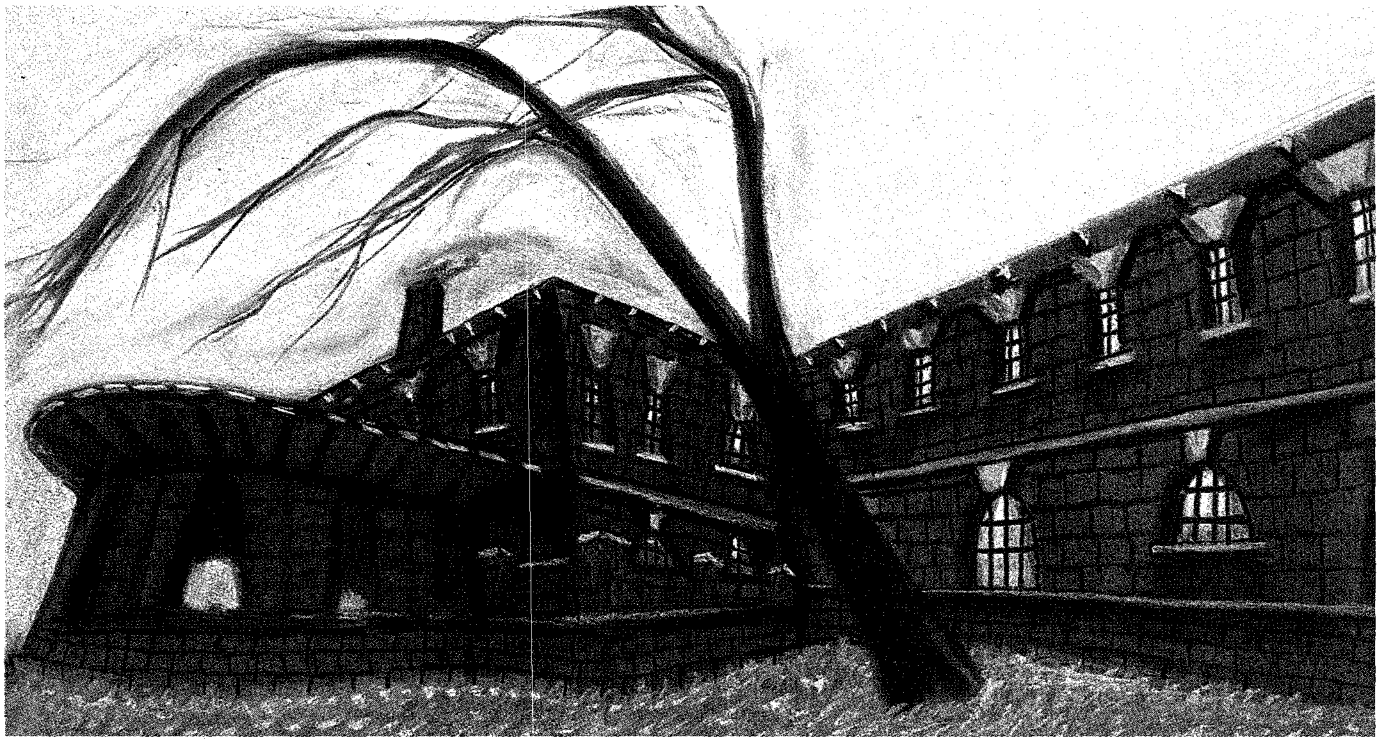


A REPORTER AT LARGE

STRANGE LOVE

The woman who wants to start a new life with John Hinckley, Jr.

BY ELSA WALSH

ST. ELIZABETHS HOSPITAL, in Washington, D.C., the nation's largest and most famous public institution for the mentally ill, has a gracious beauty: red brick buildings, large magnolia trees, and wide lawns stretching out over three hundred and thirty-six acres. From the hospital's inception, in 1855, by the reformer Dorothea Dix, the grounds were seen as an essential ingredient in the treatment of mental illness. Dix imagined "paths spread with green turf beneath the feet of the strolling invalid," and a thousand trees and plants, a hundred and seventy varieties from all over the world, were planted there. One spot, called the Point, provides a spectacular view of Washington, extending beyond the Potomac and the Anacostia Rivers to the Capitol and the National Cathedral. But St. Elizabeths also has a ghostly, abandoned feeling. There are now about seven hundred patients; at its peak, forty years ago, there were eight thousand, and many of the hundred and twenty buildings are empty. But on any given afternoon, weather permitting, one man, the most notorious of the remaining inmates, can be found sitting, usually reading, on a peeling forest-green bench in front of the John Howard Pavilion, a building reserved for patients brought here through the criminal-justice system. He is John W. Hinckley, Jr., who in 1982 was found not guilty by reason of insanity in the shooting of President Ronald Reagan.

Except for court appearances, Hinckley, who is now forty-three, has been off the property only once in seventeen years—for a Christmas dinner in 1986. Hinckley and his lawyers have been demanding another outside visit, arguing that his mental illness is in remission, as his doctors agree. Although prosecutors have objected—the only such challenge in the hospital's history—Hinckley won his first court victory in January, when a federal appellate-court panel ruled that he could leave the grounds for a six-hour supervised visit. Other visits will presumably follow.

If all goes as planned, sometime soon, in a private house in the Washington area, Hinckley will be greeted by his parents and his fiancée, Leslie deVeau. Hinckley and deVeau met in 1982, while deVeau, too, was a patient at St. Elizabeths, and Hinckley, like his doctors and his parents, credits much of his improvement to her. He has told his lawyer that deVeau proves it is possible to construct a new life and find a way back to sanity.

The crime that Leslie deVeau committed is unimaginable. In the early morning of March 18, 1982, she climbed the stairs to her bedroom, on the second floor, retrieved a Remington 12-gauge semiautomatic shotgun that her hus-

MICHAEL RAMSEUR

band, a hunter, had stored under their bed, and entered the room of her ten-year-old daughter, Erin, who was asleep in her bed. DeVeau, who was then thirty-eight, closed her eyes, placed the gun against her daughter's back, and fired one shot. DeVeau returned to her bedroom. She propped the gun on the floor, aiming the muzzle at her heart, and pulled the trigger. The gun jumped and the discharge pierced her left arm instead, almost amputating it. "Let me die," deVeau told the first police officer to arrive. When her mother saw her later that night at the hospital, deVeau cried, "I loved her. I loved her. Why didn't God want me?"

I MET deVeau for the first time more than a year ago, in a conference room at Dickstein, Shapiro, Morin & Oshinsky, the Washington law firm that represents John Hinckley. Hinckley has not talked to the press for years and declined to be interviewed for this account, but deVeau, who, despite frequent requests, had never spoken to a reporter, agreed to talk to me.

DeVeau is now fifty-five, and bears almost no resemblance to the person I had seen in photographs. In 1982, she had frosted hair and, at five feet six, weighed barely a hundred pounds. She is now slightly plump and has shoulder-length brown hair, which she sometimes pulls back with barrettes. On this particular day, she wore large tortoiseshell glasses, a high-necked white blouse, a midcalf-length black-and-white print skirt, a black blazer, black loafers, and pearls. Her left arm is artificial; it is alabaster-colored and the hand has perfectly shaped nails.

"I don't do interviews—I'd like you to know that" was one of the first things she said to me, hesitantly, after Hinckley's lawyer, Barry Levine, left the room and we were alone. She was breaking her silence, she said, because Hinckley, who had helped her more than anyone else, was being treated unfairly by the legal and the medical systems. She had decided to act as Hinckley's voice because he had, in effect, been silenced. He had been diagnosed initially as dangerously "narcissistic," with a pathological need for fame. Any hint that he was interested in talking to the media had been used against him. In 1995, for example, he had told a hospital employee that Barbara Walters wanted to interview him, and the claim was cited by a judge as a major reason to deny his request for a brief visit off the grounds in 1997. "Part of my agenda today is to help you see who John is, the real John, because none of the press conveys that," deVeau said.

Over the next several months, I talked with deVeau about Hinckley and about her own life. In my mind, one question kept recurring: How did deVeau live with herself? I couldn't help thinking that sanity was her true punishment, and one day I asked her about that. She said, "Many times over the years I have gotten angry. Why did I get well?"

ON August 5, 1982, after three months in a private hospital, deVeau appeared in District of Columbia Superior Court, where she was formally charged with first-degree murder. The murder, five months earlier, had been the subject of intense media coverage (deVeau came from an old Washington family; she was listed in the Green Book, the Washington social register), and prosecutors were scornful of the expected insanity defense. During the hearing, at which one prosecutor repeatedly called her a "psychotic killer," deVeau became so distressed that her lawyer seemed to have trouble communicating with her, and the judge committed her to St. Elizabeths for evaluation. Like all defendants in criminal cases, she was sent to the John Howard Pavilion, a desolate-looking building situated next to a hospital graveyard. Most

Hinckley met Leslie deVeau at St. Elizabeths Hospital. "We both had the same reaction: 'This is a safe person,'" deVeau said.

of the residents are black, poor, male, uneducated, and schizophrenic. DeVeau, upon her arrival, was made to take a shower and use a delousing agent. She was given a housedress and slippers and escorted to the women's ward.

The prosecutor assigned to the case asked Neil Blumberg, a thirty-one-year-old forensic psychiatrist, to examine deVeau. Blumberg had reviewed hundreds of criminal cases in Maryland, but never for the United States Attorney's office in Washington, and he told me, "This was potentially a big referral source and a prominent case, and I was saying to myself, 'Hmm, probably the agenda of the prosecutors is that they want to have the person found responsible.' " Blumberg later explained, "For someone to be found insane it's not enough for him to be just mentally ill." That is, the mental illness must cause the person to lack substantial capacity either to appreciate the wrongfulness of what he has done or to behave according to the law. Conversely, a schizophrenic who commits a criminal act with a seemingly rational motivation—say, stealing a wallet because he has no money—might be declared mentally ill but still be held criminally responsible.

Blumberg interviewed deVeau three times. He also talked to her husband, her relatives, her friends, and her doctors. All told a consistent story: deVeau had been hospitalized once before, in 1979, after experiencing delusions and attempting to kill herself. She had responded well to antipsychotic medication then, and for the next few years she seemed to get along well. She was a room mother and a library assistant at her daughter's school, and also a county social worker. She and her family were frequently described as near-perfect. At some point, her doctor took her off the medication. In the spring of 1981, she quit her job. Gradually, she became delusional, believing that newspapers and television were sending messages to her and that a plot existed to harm her and Erin. Her marriage deteriorated, and she wanted a divorce, but her husband, a bank executive, refused. Several times, she attempted to take her life. In a diary entry she wrote, "I would still like to get away, but I guess that is next to impossible. No money. No job or hope of ever working. There's a lot I can live without and I think I would be willing to just hit the road if it didn't mean leaving Erin."

Everyone Blumberg interviewed, including deVeau's husband, praised her as a mother. To Blumberg, it sounded as if she and her daughter "had almost an ideal type of relationship." He later added, "The act of murder, as bizarre as it seems, I think for her was an act of love. Something terrible was going to happen in the world and the only way to protect her and Erin was for them to leave together."

Blumberg concluded that deVeau had been deeply psychotic and was not criminally responsible. He also found himself surprisingly affected by her. "My youngest son was born in January of 1982, and I had a four-year-old child," he said. "It was very difficult to maintain one's clinical distance from this." Blumberg worried that as deVeau got well she might again attempt suicide: "Her illness made her think what she was doing was reasonable and appropriate—and she wakes up from this bad dream, saying, 'Oh, my God. What have I done?' "

WHEN I met deVeau for the second time, again at the law firm, she brought photographs. "This one is hard for me," she said. There were four people in the photograph, but my eye was drawn to a blond-haired elfin child smiling widely and a woman with an intent stare. It is one of the last photographs of deVeau with her daughter. "I was looking crazy even then," she said.

I told her I had been rereading her psychiatric reports and had been struck by a sentence written by Blumberg: "Everyone described her as 'an excellent, caring mother.' " DeVeau looked at me and said, "I adored her. I cannot tell you how much she meant to me. And you know what a child's like. It's as if you can't believe this gift that's been given to you. It was my way of keeping her safe. I can remember holding on to the thought for a long time that God had wanted me to do this, so somehow it was all going to turn out all right."

Most psychiatrists now believe that delusions have a biological or biochemical basis. After the murder, deVeau was placed on medication, and when she entered St. Elizabeths she started taking Triavil 4-25, an antipsychotic and antidepressant that seemed to work exceptionally well. By the time she met with Blumberg, though, she was clinging to one thought: God had meant her to die. She began stockpiling her medication, and two weeks after her last meeting with Blumberg she swallowed her stockpile of pills. She woke up thirsty in the middle of the night, stood up, and fainted. She remembered thinking, What am I doing here?

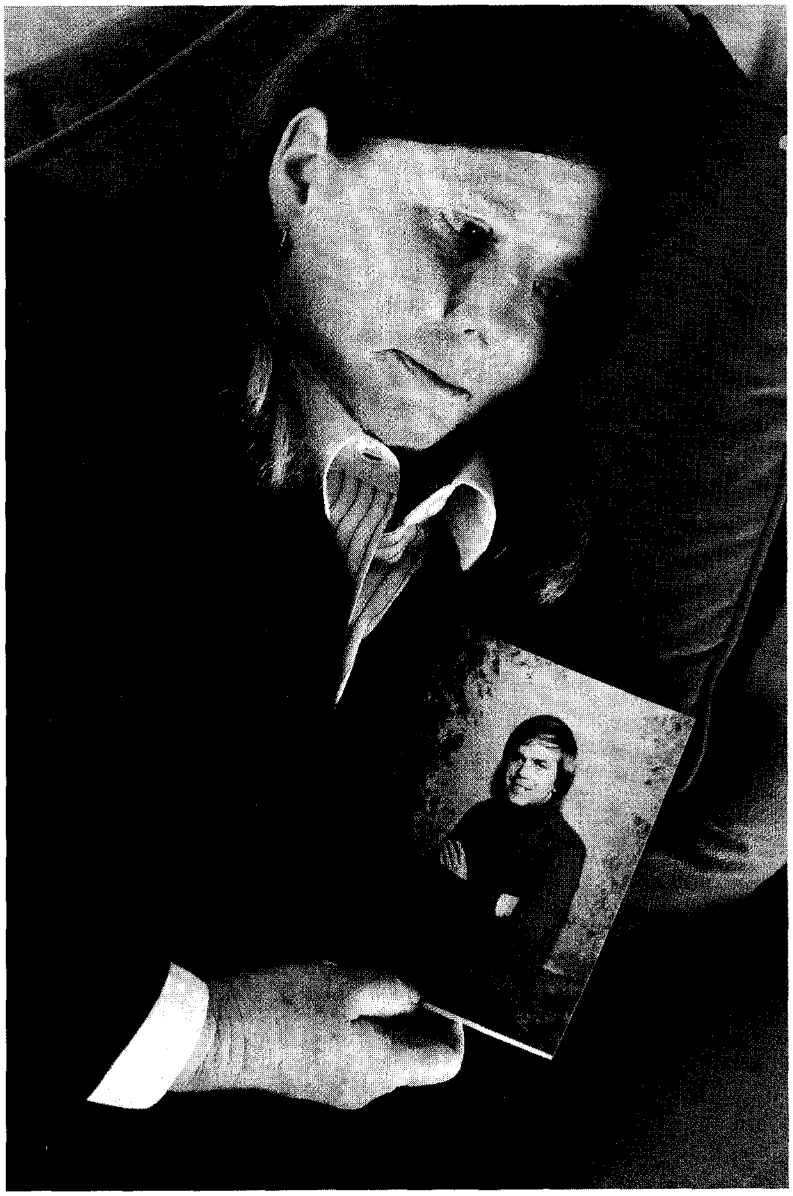
DeVeau knew that any hint of suicidal tendencies would mean around-the-clock monitoring, so she told no one about the incident. The next day, she attended a Halloween party in one of the men's wards. The patients wore half-masks, and deVeau noticed that one man kept approaching her and then retreating. He introduced himself by his first name—John. "I'd ask you to dance if I danced," deVeau recalled his saying. She removed her mask and started to speak. "I had been there long enough to be very lonely," she told me. "He sat down and I didn't stop talking." Over the next two hours, she confided in him about everything from her childhood to the killing of her daughter. Finally, John Hinckley interrupted deVeau to escort her to a bulletin board and show her a newspaper article about himself. "That's how I discovered who he was," she said. "He was still operating under the delusion that it made sense what he did. . . . That he was supposed to do this to prove his love to Jodie Foster." Shortly after Hinckley was acquitted of shooting Reagan and wounding a Secret Service agent, a Washington police officer, and Reagan's press secretary, James Brady, he wrote to the *Times*, saying, in part, "The shooting outside the Washington Hilton hotel was the greatest love offering in the history of the world. . . . At one time Miss Foster was a star and I was the insignificant fan. Now everything is changed. I am Napoleon and she is Josephine. I am Romeo and she is Juliet."

One of the few people who were unaware of Hinckley's identity was Leslie deVeau. Nor did she know who Jodie Foster was. She said, "It took me a long time to really react to his crime and to all that other stuff. That just wasn't what my life was about or his life was about. We were in this sort of place of trying to survive, get well. But he was just a friend, and there weren't many friends in that world. We both had the same reaction of just sort of instantly feeling 'This is a safe person.' "

Shortly after they met, deVeau and Hinckley began to exchange letters. Although they were in adjacent wards, contact was severely limited. Their first notes were matter-of-fact; Hinckley would recount a visit from his parents or say that he'd read a good book. He had to be discreet, because his mail was being monitored. The notes were a respite for deVeau, who was undergoing a series of gruelling examinations by Blumberg and other doctors. She was trying to come to grips not only with what she'd done but with what she hadn't done. She prayed regularly to her daughter asking her forgiveness, she told me, but some mornings she'd wake up forgetting where she was and expecting Erin to be there.

Although deVeau and Hinckley rarely saw each other in the months after they met, they grew closer through their notes. "I love you like a sister," Hinckley wrote once. At a Christmas party, deVeau surprised him with a kiss on the cheek, and she started signing her letters "Love, Leslie." The limited relationship was enough. "It was like a substitute illusion or delusion," she told me. "And I think it offered, for both of us, something more to help us ease back in."

On December 20, 1982, deVeau was taken to D.C. Superior Court, and there the chief judge accepted the conclusion reached by doctors for both the prosecution and the defense: that at the time of the shootings she had suffered from paranoid schizophrenia. (Later, other doctors offered a different diagnosis: that deVeau had been so severely depressed that she became psychotic and delusional.) The judge committed her to an indefinite period of treatment. At the hearing, deVeau listened as what she'd done was recounted, and she signed a statement that read, "Erin deVeau died almost immediately as a result of this wound, which caused severe internal lacerations, perforations, contusions and fractures, damaging her right lung, trachea, esophagus and ribs and causing massive internal bleeding." When she returned to St. Elizabeths, she said, "I also had my own accusing voices."



"I needed somebody to mother," Leslie deVeau said of John Hinckley, Jr. "My arms ached." Photograph by Maggie Steber.

THE literature on mothers who kill their children is not extensive, but the one characteristic that distinguishes this crime from other homicides is the high rate of explicitly altruistic motives. The Japanese even have a term, *oyako shinju*, for a mother who commits suicide and kills her child in the belief that it's a greater sin to leave a child behind to be cared for by others.

Blumberg thought that in the first months after the murder deVeau still wanted to believe that she had acted in her daughter's best interests—a pattern of denial he had seen in other patients. "It's almost a state of disbelief," he said. "They can't believe what they have done or what has happened." In therapy, deVeau needed to accept the damage she had done, and that meant she had to relive the shooting again and again.

Just before Valentine's Day of 1983, while deVeau was sitting in chapel, someone led a prayer for Hinckley. He had been found unconscious, apparently after trying to kill himself with medication he had hoarded; he was on a respirator, and the prognosis was uncertain. (Hinckley later told deVeau that he had attempted suicide because he had begun to realize that his fantasies about Foster were not real.) DeVeau began to cry, but she understood why he'd tried it. Erin's eleventh birthday was only days away, and she could no longer justify what she had done. "It takes a long time to really realize that what happened was a delusion," she told me. "As you're coming out of that, you realize that it was all awful, because there's nothing, and you're alive, but you don't want to be and you're not supposed to be."

The day Hinckley returned from the hospital, his nurse let him wait at the door of his ward until deVeau could see that he was O.K. He waved, and the two started a routine of waiting at the door to wave at mealtimes. "It was the thing

"Maybe we should try visualization, Chief!"

that got you out of bed every day," she said. Next, they began secretly taping messages to the underside of the dining-room tables. They signed them "L" and "J" and after a while began to write "I love you." Talking was forbidden, so deVeau would signal "I love you" in sign language.

Not long after Hinckley's suicide attempt, which came close to the first anniversary of deVeau's shooting, deVeau was back in court. The law in the District of Columbia requires that a defendant found not guilty by reason of insanity be given a hearing within fifty days to determine whether he or she is fit to be released, and, although doctors believed that deVeau showed no symptoms of her mental illness, no one expected her immediate release, and the arguments seemed pro forma. There was, however, one remarkable exchange between the psychiatrist for the women's ward, Richard McIlroy, and the prosecutor, William Nussbaum. Nussbaum, after noting that through her actions deVeau had lost a daughter and a home, and that she and her husband were divorcing, asked, "Her life has become markedly worse, hasn't it?"

"No," McIlroy responded.

"It has not?" Nussbaum said.

"She is on the start of a new life," McIlroy said. "She got out of a marriage she was unhappy with, and she is now going through, hopefully, a rebirth. I think there is hope."

"A rebirth?" Nussbaum asked in disbelief. "Is that a psychiatric term?"

"I think we could think in terms of a new life, and she is working towards this goal."

Nussbaum asked a few more questions, his incredulity obviously building. "And you look at Miss deVeau and you see hope for the future?"

"I certainly do," McIlroy answered.

Nussbaum continued, "Why, by the way, Doctor, don't you think she might not, if she were given the chance, attempt to kill her husband?"

"She wasn't concerned about her husband in her psychotic thinking. She was concerned about her child," McIlroy said.

"Concerned enough to kill the child?" Nussbaum asked.

"[In] her delusional thinking, she thought the child was in danger," McIlroy responded.

After a few more questions, Nussbaum returned to deVeau's supposed new life, saying to McIlroy, "In fact, in your letter—is this your language in this letter of February 4th, 'The violent acts she committed abruptly terminated one set of problems and left her with a task of accepting her past and making a new life for herself'?"

"That is correct," McIlroy answered.

I later asked Nussbaum, who is now a partner in one of Washington's top law firms, whether he felt that he had been tricked into accepting deVeau's insanity plea. No, he answered. Though he found it hard to accept that she would go unpunished, the experts agreed that she had been insane. "But I do remember feeling that it was interesting to me how much better they were saying she was six months after she was in there." Nussbaum paused. "I frankly don't know how she lives with herself."

A MONTH after that hearing, deVeau was allowed to walk around the grounds at St. Elizabeths. One Sunday, Hinckley spotted her walking with her mother, who lived nearby and visited frequently; he called out to her from his fourth-floor window, and deVeau rushed over for the first of what became daily conversations, regardless of the weather. "We'd shout," she told me. "He could hear me, and so probably could the rest of the world, but we weren't aware of anybody." At Hinckley's trial, doctors had testified that he was virtually a recluse, but with deVeau he was loquacious; they sometimes talked for hours. "I think what we both realized was that we couldn't stop talking," she said. "It was as if we'd both had this core of loneliness for one hundred years. I'd go out on the grounds at nine o'clock in the morning and we would spend the whole day talking. There was this worn spot where I stood."

Every Wednesday morning, the women's ward spent two hours socializing and dancing with one of the men's wards in so-called jam sessions. Because there was only one women's ward and about a dozen men's wards, deVeau and Hinckley were together only every three months. DeVeau hated these events: "We were sort of the prostitutes of the building. It was awful and it was the only contact these men had with women for years and years, so they wanted to touch you." When Hinckley's ward had its turn, though, deVeau would dress an hour early, putting on a skirt and tying a ribbon in her hair. In contrast to the other men, Hinckley arrived neatly dressed. They'd sit on a couch talking, while most of the other patients danced.

In late spring of 1983, deVeau attended a party in Hinckley's ward which, coincidentally, fell on his twenty-eighth birthday; deVeau was then forty. Unexpectedly, Hinckley asked deVeau to marry him. She accepted. "We joke about it now," she told me. " 'Yes, I'll marry you. By the way, what did you say your name was?' That was the sense of it." In retrospect, she said, the proposal didn't really have anything to do with being engaged or getting married. "It wasn't totally real. It was all about having something to hold on to." At a dance in June, Hinckley told deVeau, "I have something for you." He had fashioned a red bread-bag tie into an engagement ring.

The Hinckley-deVeau relationship caused some gossip at St. Elizabeths. But Blumberg, like many at the hospital, came to regard it as important to the treatment of deVeau and Hinckley, whose mental illnesses were said to be marked by seclusion and detachment. She and Hinckley shared similarities in a place where almost everyone around was unlike them. "Basically," Blumberg said, "they were the only two white people at John Howard Pavilion. They came from similar backgrounds"—both were from well-to-do, upper-middle-class Washington families—"and they were both bright. I don't mean that in any kind of racist or derogatory way. But they stuck out like sore thumbs." He later said, in retrospect, "I would have found it odd had they not connected."

In therapy of the sort deVeau was undergoing, doctors often expect emotions for a loved one to be displaced onto the doctor. DeVeau had a different kind of transference. "I needed somebody to mother," she said of Hinckley. "My arms ached." She also needed to be loved, she said. "There was somebody that loved me in all my ugliness."

Soon deVeau's doctors were recommending that she be allowed to make brief trips off the grounds to see how she would handle the stress of reëntering normal life and encountering people who knew what she had done. This was of particular concern because of the horror of her crime. Indeed, in an unusual breach of protocol a St. Elizabeths staff member angrily accused her of being a "child murderer." Prosecutors were opposed to the trips and asked Blumberg to reëvaluate her.

Eventually, in September, 1983, Blumberg appeared in court to advocate expanded privileges for deVeau. He was joined by Richard McIlroy and Thomas C. Goldman, who had examined deVeau for her insanity defense. Nussbaum, the prosecutor, seemed flustered by the unanimous opinion of the three psychiatrists (including his own witness, Blumberg). None of the three suggested that she had got over killing her daughter, but they all seemed almost admiring of a woman who had experienced a great grief.

Nussbaum wondered whether there was some secret about human misery that the psychiatrists knew but he could not understand: "Doctor, let me ask you this. How is it—and it gives me no great pleasure to ask this question in front of Ms. deVeau, sitting here. How is it that a woman can essentially kill her daughter and ever be in a position where she is mentally healthy again? How can a person internalize that behavior as something that they have done . . . that she cannot hate herself or at some point want to do something to herself about that?"

"Well, it is, of course, a very good question, a difficult question," Goldman responded. "I can answer mostly in terms of what I know generally about how people do deal with these things. I think it is possible for a person who has done something which they would not want to think of themselves as having done—something which is horrible—it is possible to come to some terms about that, partly a recognition that one was in a different state of mind. . . . Someone who kills in self-defense does not usually, normally, feel as guilty as someone who

"If you are still unhappy with your current allowance compensation, may I once more suggest to you a life of crime?"

kills cold-blooded or kills in passion."

He continued, "I think a person can come to a recognition of his set of personal circumstances. I think in her therapy Ms. deVeau has learned something about how her sense of hopelessness, her anger at her husband, her feeling that she was locked in a situation in which there was no sympathy for her, and in which she was immensely angry but unable to express. I think that her understanding of that—her sympathetic understanding of that—has enabled her to deal with this. She feels that she wasn't alone in this; that she was pushed to it."

Three weeks later, the judge denied the request; despite the psychiatric testimony, he believed that deVeau might still be a danger to herself. DeVeau thought about escaping. She hated living in the John Howard Pavilion. "I don't know who ever thought that putting mentally ill people together made them better," she told me. But, she said, "I realized I didn't have anyplace to run to."

IN the two years after the shooting, Leslie and her husband, Tony, saw each other twice, and on March 29, 1984, they met in divorce court, where, at one point, Tony deVeau shouted that Leslie had killed his child. She shouted back, "You had a part in it!" At the time of the shooting, Tony deVeau had told a reporter, "I think her problem was life." He acknowledged in a deposition that his wife had claimed several times to have tried suicide, but he didn't know whether to believe her. (I spoke to Tony deVeau last year. He'd changed, and then quit, his job. He wasn't listed in any telephone directories, and he did not appear to have an unlisted home or business phone. It was as if he'd decided to erase himself. He was friendly and we talked at length. He had never remarried, and he was working as a banking consultant. He wanted to know how his former wife was. He did not want to be quoted, except to say, "It just brings back a very hard time for me. It's something you never forget.")

A month before her divorce became final, in October of 1984, deVeau won a new hearing on the question of leaving the hospital grounds, and this time the judge agreed with Blumberg, who said that it would be "extremely therapeutic" for deVeau to leave one day a week for a social visit, and to take a class. She used

ARTIST'S EASEL

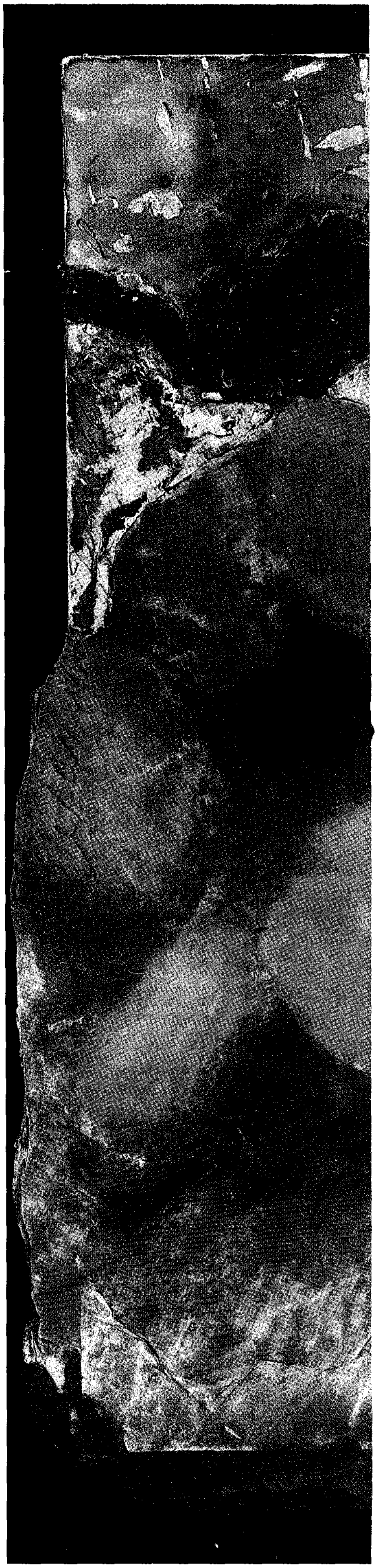
OBJECT LESSONS

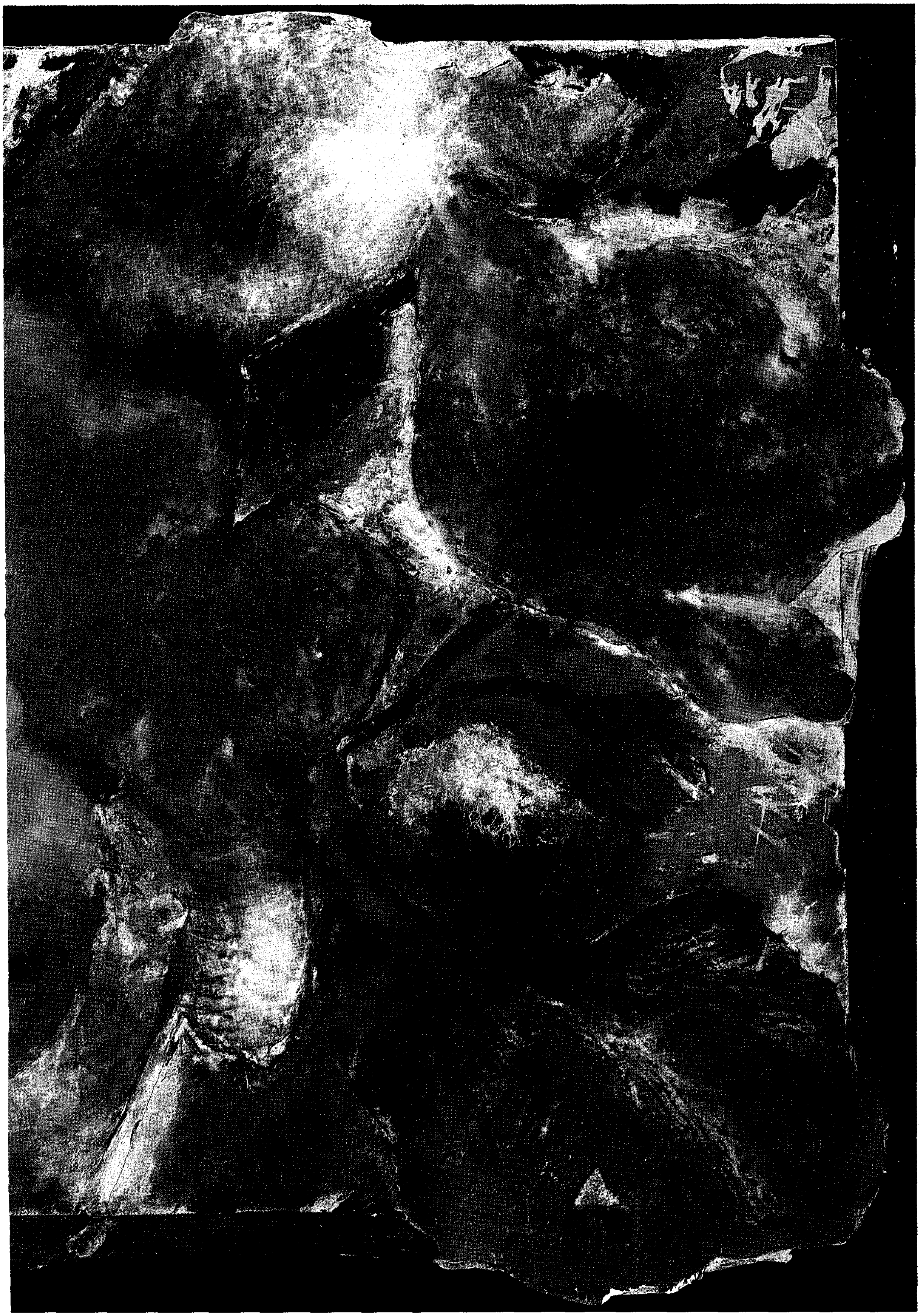
THE odd mixture of crudeness and refinement in Donald Sultan's painting sets it against the grain of much recent art. Out of industrial materials such as vinyl tile, butyl rubber, and spackling plaster Sultan builds pictures that release pleasing vibrations in the mind and the eye, and any self-respecting postmodernist knows you can't do that. Sultan has been doing it for twenty years, though—his first one-man show here was in 1979, at the Willard Gallery—and his work has held up a lot better than some of the better-known œuvres of members of the class of 1980.

This is the moment for a fresh look at Sultan. His recent show at Knoedler, which included paintings of spectral birds, muscular smoke rings, and still-lifes, was the strongest he'd had in years. Meanwhile, the Jewish Museum is showing his drawings for "Bar Mitzvah," a book he did in collaboration with the playwright David Mamet, and Marco Fine Arts, in Los Angeles, has just released "Visual Poetics: The Art of Donald Sultan," one of the most lavishly printed artist's books of the past decade. This limited-edition *livre d'artiste*, which includes several specially commissioned poems by the Beat veteran Robert Creeley, is a mini-retrospective of Sultan's work, from the minimalist images and landscapes and "event" paintings (industrial disasters, forest fires) of the eighties to the increasingly complex and allusive still-lifes of recent years.

"Geranium, June 16 1989" (right), an image reproduced in the Marco Fine Arts book, is simultaneously abstract and figurative, modern and pre-modern: it wrenches the still-life from its art-historical niche and flaunts it in our face with the immediacy of a cropped photograph. Still-life is Sultan's signature genre these days. In the show at Knoedler, huge black eggs figured in four of the paintings, lending a rather ominous, industrial-strength weight to the compositions. What Sultan looks for, he once said, are "things that turn you off and turn you on at the same time."

—CALVIN TOMKINS





COURTESY MARCO FINE ARTS

one of her first days away from St. Elizabeths, however, to visit her daughter's grave, which she had never seen.

The day was sunny and surprisingly peaceful, and a friend from New York had offered to drive her there. The grave was in her husband's family plot, in Maryland, and the site was a pretty one, on a sloping lawn with beautiful old oak trees. DeVeau told me that she had prayed to her daughter and asked God for forgiveness. She found it almost impossible to leave, as if by going she were again leaving her daughter, a feeling that would recur for years. Worse than that was something very simple: not being able to touch her daughter. "You know when they're infants, of course, you are always holding them, but I think what you don't realize when they get older you are always touching them, whether you're straightening their hair," she said. "I wasn't aware of how physical it was until then."

Hinckley's progress was much slower than deVeau's. Still in his grand mode, he told one doctor, "Ezra Pound was the most famous patient before me. I'm famous as hell." In a letter to a newspaper, he compared himself to a political prisoner, complaining, "There is no difference between John Hinckley and Andrei Sakharov." Hospital officials later discovered that he was still collecting pictures of Jodie Foster. None of this mattered to deVeau. What was most important was that she had a friend she could talk with. "He's one of the few that I can tell how much it hurts," she said. "It's too hard for other people to hear." And, unlike everyone else, they were in no position to judge each other.

By mid-1985, doctors at St. Elizabeths reported to the court that deVeau was "ready to be moved into full-time outpatient status," and the judge agreed. Neither she nor Hinckley viewed her pending departure as a risk to their relationship. He had recently inscribed a copy of his parents' book, "Breaking Points," for deVeau's mother: "I was lost until I found Leslie and everything changed from the day I met her. Leslie made me want to live again and she is now the sunshine of my life." In a psychological test earlier that year, he had written, "The happiest time is when I'm with my girlfriend"; in a similar test in 1982, he wrote, "My greatest fear is finding out that Jodie is getting married to someone else."

Shortly before deVeau's release, *People* ran an article about the Hinckley-deVeau engagement and published a photograph of her. Predictably, the union was treated like an affair between freaks. Even Hinckley's mother, despite having written deVeau a loving note welcoming her into the family, gently advised her to consider ending the relationship. "I felt that he would be more of a burden to her than she ever would be to him," Jo Ann Hinckley explained one evening, when I met with her and her husband, Jack, in a restaurant in Alexandria, Virginia. She recalled deVeau saying, "I want it understood that John has helped me far more than I have ever or will ever help him." She went on, "And she told me without saying it in so many words, 'Just don't mention it again. This is the way it is.' "

On being released, deVeau remained under the hospital's jurisdiction, but she was able to live in her own apartment. It was the first time she had ever lived alone, and she had to master such routine trivialities as paying bills; yet she enjoyed the almost thrilling aspects of freedom. She could wake up in the middle of the night and have ice cream or take a bath. She had a part-time job at St. Elizabeths and was taking a class at George Washington University. Above her desk she kept a photograph of Erin, who would have been thirteen. Her mother had saved a box of possessions for her, and in it she found her daughter's "night-night," her blanket. Incredibly, it still smelled of Erin. "I slept with that for a long time," she told me. Her greatest fear was that she would do something that would land her back in the hospital. She also worried about how people would react to her. The supermarket tabloids had made her famous; shortly after her release, she caught sight of a woman from her old neighborhood. "I saw her see me and go fleeing out of the store. I thought, Am I that scary?"

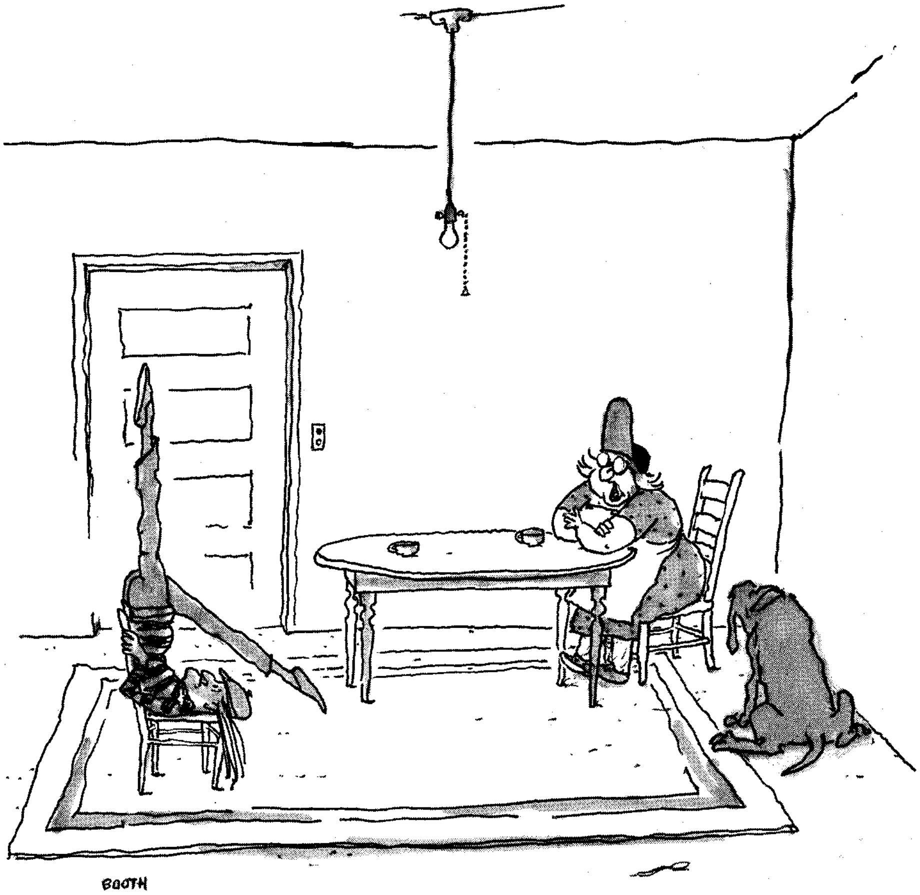
She talked on the phone with Hinckley, and saw him on weekends. She could stay for only half an hour, and they had to sit across from each other at a glass-topped table in a crowded visiting room. Still, they held hands, and they

"My name is Andrew, and I need a ride."

kissed goodbye, though she was not allowed to get up before he left. “We were like fourteen-year-olds,” deVeau said. This small change had a huge effect. “It wasn’t until the visiting room, where we sat at a table and were looking in each other’s faces and there’s nothing to do for the half hour but to talk, that our conversations started getting deeper,” she said.

They talked about Erin. They also began to talk about Hinckley’s attempt to kill Reagan. His story came out slowly, in bits and pieces, and continued to do so over the years. “He would talk about his own disbelief that he’d done what he had done. He can still say, ‘Where in the world did that come from?’ ” He told her that he felt terrible when he saw James Brady, on television, in a wheelchair, so damaged by the bullet that he had fired. “He used to have terrible nightmares about what he did, and for a while he’d dream that he was paralyzed,” deVeau said. “He talked about the shame he feels over hurting someone like that.”

At Christmas, deVeau and Hinckley exchanged gold ingots on necklaces they had made for each other, which were engraved with a line from a song Hinckley had written: “We will make it somehow.”



“Leon, you are a millennial Odyssey.”

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Finally, a year later, during the 1986 Christmas holidays, deVeau and Hinckley were able to spend time alone together outside St. Elizabeths: the hospital had arranged for Hinckley to spend a day with his family in northern Virginia—the first and only time Hinckley has been allowed to leave the grounds for a social visit.

DeVeau’s mother had died in October (her father had died years earlier). DeVeau and her only sister were estranged. “I’m a hard person to integrate in your life,” she explained. After breakfast and a couple of hours of socializing and watching Hinckley home movies, Hinckley and deVeau found a place to be alone in the house. DeVeau went up to Hinckley and began kissing him. “I led the way, and I’d never done that,” deVeau said. “I think he was startled—‘What is this woman doing to me?’ And in a way it did bring a forwardness out of me such as I’d never had.” She knew that she was Hinckley’s first girlfriend and that his sexual experiences had been limited to a few encounters with prostitutes shortly before the assassination attempt.

At some point before things had gone too far, Jack Hinckley called out to the couple. There was little worry about their going anywhere—not with the Secret Service sitting outside—but Jack Hinckley had a heightened sense of responsibility. After they reappeared, he announced that he wanted to talk to them about the Bible. DeVeau told me that she and Hinckley still laugh about that part of the day. “It was talking to you like you were retarded, which a lot of people mix up with being mentally ill. They think you’re somehow limited, as if we had no brains.”

HINCKLEY’S behavior during the next five years was messy and complicated. Twice in the late eighties, he appeared to have convinced his doctors that he was well enough to leave the grounds. But each time investigations prompted by court hearings revealed unsettling facts: Hinckley had corresponded with Ted Bundy, the serial murderer; his infatuation with Jodie Foster seemed to endure (he’d requested a nude drawing of her); and he’d referred to Charles Manson in a letter as a “cool dude” and a “great prophet.” These revelations left an embarrassing impression that the hospital didn’t know what was going on in the mind of its most famous patient, and that notion was underscored when a journal that Hinckley kept in 1987 was found. “Psychiatry is a guessing game,” he had written, “and I do my best to keep the fools guessing about me. They will never know the true John Hinckley. Only I fully understand myself.”

Hinckley’s psychological evaluations took a turn for the worse. One report, written in 1989 by David Powell, a hospital psychologist, declares, “The issues of poor judgment, need for ego-gratification through the media, isolation from others at all but a superficial level, grandiosity, suspiciousness, defiance in the face of narcissistic injury, refusal to accept responsibility for his actions other than in a fleeting way, his emotional volatility, his tendency to lie and/or distort when confronted, his lack of empathy for others, his sense of entitlement—all remain as unresolved therapeutic issues." That report is still cited in court battles over Hinckley's privileges. Still, Powell did take note of Hinckley's ability to maintain a stable and intimate relationship with a woman, deVeau. (A staff psychiatrist divulged that Hinckley had described deVeau as "the biggest influence in my life" and had said that his "ultimate wish" was to be released to her custody.)

Throughout the late eighties, deVeau increased her efforts to help Hinckley, and she took an active role in his legal case—sometimes against the better judgment of his parents. Hinckley's lawyers, Vince Fuller (of Williams & Connolly) and Greg Craig (who was one of President Clinton's lead attorneys in the impeachment battle), had accomplished the difficult feat of winning a judgment of not guilty by reason of insanity for Hinckley after the assassination attempt. But both Hinckley and deVeau thought he needed someone who was not a part of the legal establishment—someone not too polite to attack the hospital and the prosecutors. Hinckley chose Mark Lane, a conspiracy theorist who over the years had reviled the official conclusions about the assassinations of President Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. Lane had written offering his assistance, and eventually fought against hospital restrictions on Hinckley's behalf.

Jack Hinckley hated the idea of Lane, but his son would not back down, and deVeau supported John and paid a small portion of Lane's fee. They argued constantly, with Jo Ann Hinckley left painfully in the middle, and the disputes went far beyond Lane. "They were both out of touch, so they didn't know how the real world operated," Jack Hinckley told me. DeVeau thought that Jack Hinckley made too many decisions for his son, and she told John so.

DeVeau and John fought, too. The fights were usually over "little stuff, stupid things," but they could result in days of a silent standoff. "I can remember commenting to someone that John was really the first person who ever really hung in there and fought with me," she told me. Hinckley's psychological reports suggested that his combativeness was a sign of growth from the days when he would not let others know what he was thinking, or fantasizing about.

In April of 1990, deVeau petitioned the court to be declared legally sane—a major ruling, which would free her from all hospital supervision. The hospital supported her motion, as did Neil Blumberg, who during a court hearing said, "I've seen a lot of people who have gone through the system and been found not responsible, and I've never seen a course of treatment that has gone as well as Ms. deVeau's." He later added, "But for the history and the fact that I knew she was ill, if one looked at her and interviewed her now, the diagnosis would be no mental illness." As for her relationship with Hinckley, Blumberg testified, "They were there emotionally for one another, and I think still are."

When it was deVeau's turn to testify, her lawyer asked about her daughter, noting that what would have been Erin's eighteenth birthday had just passed. "I think right after the shooting it hurt so bad I couldn't even stand to think," she said. "It has been terrible to find peace with knowing that I killed the child I loved more than anything in the world." DeVeau was less direct when asked whether she had a romantic relationship with Hinckley. Were they engaged? "I don't use that word, but if you're asking me if my life were different and his life were different what I would wish, then I might use that word." At the end of the hearing, the judge released her from supervision.

By 1991, Hinckley was living in a medium-security ward. He had a new lawyer, Barry Levine, and a new job—working four hours a day in a clerical position at the Acute Psychiatric Hospital, on the grounds. He was receiving outstanding evaluations, and things seemed to be going well when, at Christmas, the hospital allowed him and deVeau to walk without an escort. A month later—nine and a half years after he entered St. Elizabeths—Hinckley was permitted to walk unescorted on the hospital grounds for an hour a day. On one of his first days out, he arranged to meet deVeau. It was raining heavily, and the two headed for a secluded hill site. DeVeau had brought golf umbrellas, a small blanket, and a pizza. By the time they reached the hill,

THEY DON'T JUST GO AWAY, EITHER

In Scandinavia, where snow falls frequently
in winter, then lies around for quite some time,
lucky cousins were living in a time vault of sorts.
No purchase on the ground floor, but through a funnel-shaped drain
one could catch glimpses, every so often, of the peach-colored
firmament. It's so terrific! It's purer than you think,
too, not that that need unduly concern us.

Father sat in his living room
off the main parlor, working at his table. We never knew
exactly what he did. We kids would amuse ourselves
with games like Authors and Old Maid, until Mamma abruptly
withdrew the lamp, and we all sat shivering in the dark for a while.
Soon it was time to go to bed. We groped our way up
nonexistent flights of stairs to the attic funnel.
Everything is so peaceful in here I can dream of more kinds
of things at once. But what if the dreams were prophetic?
Stumbling down an alley, screaming, forehead bathed in blood

or ossified like an old tree root that can barely speak, and when it can
says things like "Do you know your horse is on fire?"

Many winters were passed in this way.
I cannot say I feel any wiser for it.
Instead my brain feels like a face freshly shaved
by the barber. I rub it with satisfaction,
giving him a good tip on the way out.
More fanciful patterns await us further along
in our destiny, I tell him, and he agrees; anything
to be rid of me and on to the next customer.
Outside, in the street, a length of silk unspools beautifully,
rejoicing in its doom.

Father, I can go no farther, the lamp blinds me
and the man behind me keeps whispering things in my ear
I'd prefer not to be able to understand.
Yet you must, my child, for the sake of the cousins
and the rabbit who await us in the dooryard.

—JOHN ASHBERY

the pizza was drenched and so were they, but they were finally together and alone.

Not long after this—deVeau is not sure when—they had sexual relations for the first time. Hinckley, she said, wasn't embarrassed at his lack of sexual experience; her own sex life had been pretty miserable. "It was more than just exciting, because it was loving," she told me, and she went on, "I don't think I can think of a thing that has any meaning to me that I haven't shared with John. I am closer emotionally to John than I ever have been to anyone, and I think the sexual part is part of that. Realistically, we have enormous limitations on what can happen between John and me. Just because we're outdoors and there are a lot of people. You can't have a wonderful sex life—you're lucky if you have a little sex life."

DeVeau and Hinckley began to hope that they might have a future together. They began talking about how they would live. Maybe they'd have separate apartments with a connecting door, because they both liked their own space. Hinckley could work in a bookstore or do something with music; he wrote songs, many of them love songs for deVeau, and he played his guitar whenever he could. DeVeau, who had taken a full-time job at the hospital, had a small amount of money from her divorce settlement which Hinckley helped her invest.

When Hinckley was moved to a minimum-security ward, in July of 1992, they were thrilled. His ward administrator, a psychologist named Susan Lerner, began noticing some changes that deVeau had seen earlier, and so did others at the hospital. Lerner is a short woman with a throaty laugh, and she is a self-described jewelry fanatic; the day I saw her, she was wearing rings on nearly every finger. She has known Hinckley for more than ten years and has been one of his staunchest supporters; perhaps one reason she may be particularly sympathetic is that she had a son who was manic-depressive. She told me that once she had asked Hinckley if he'd seen "JFK," the Oliver Stone movie. He hadn't. "He said, 'I'm one of the few people who believe that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone.' And I said, 'Why? What do you mean?' And he said, 'Well, you don't have to be too bright to assassinate a President. Look, I was able to do it. I was able to attempt it.' And that was a totally different mode of thought for him. In the past, he would have said, 'It took a lot to do that,' and now he was saying that what he did was not bright. I don't know if it was a hallmark or a watershed, but it certainly was, I thought, significant in terms of a change in his thinking."

The day after Jodie Foster won an Oscar for her performance in the movie "Silence of the Lambs," Lerner asked Hinckley if he'd seen her on television. "He said, 'No. I was in my room reading. They were watching the Oscars, so I went and read in my room.' And I checked with the staff and they said yes, that was true. He didn't want to be sitting in the dayroom watching Jodie Foster on TV. He told me that."

OVER the next couple of years, Hinckley and deVeau settled into a pattern of daily meetings. Then, in March of 1995, Hinckley began a friendship with a young hospital pharmacist named Jeannette Wick, who some say bears a slight resemblance to Jodie Foster. Wick had offered to lend Hinckley some books and invited him into her office to talk. Hinckley excitedly told deVeau about the meeting, and she urged him to develop the friendship. "I sometimes feel that I'm the only one that can bring the world to him," she told me. "Everybody needs more than one person in their life, so it was nice to have another person."

At first, Wick seemed to encourage his visits. She offered him other books and volunteered to go to the library for him. "In the beginning, there was give-and-take, like friends do," Hinckley told one psychologist. "I liked her. She was open." Another time, she told him she would teach him to crochet. As Wick testified at a 1997 hearing, "He laughed and he said, 'The other guys out at John Howard will make fun of me.' And I said, 'Who cares what the other guys think? If you want to crochet, crochet. I'll show you.'" Hinckley began stopping by the hospital pharmacy as often as four times a week and would spend a good part of the afternoon talking with Wick in her office. Some of the pharmacy staff expressed concern; Hinckley's therapist, Wick said later, told her not to worry, saying, "John has been at the hospital for so many years he has a tendency to live vicariously."

But Wick soon realized that the relationship was getting out of hand. "The visits were escalating. The telephone calls were escalating," she said at the hearing. When she saw Hinckley sitting outside her office during a fire drill, she blew up. "I was very angry," she recalled, "and I told him he

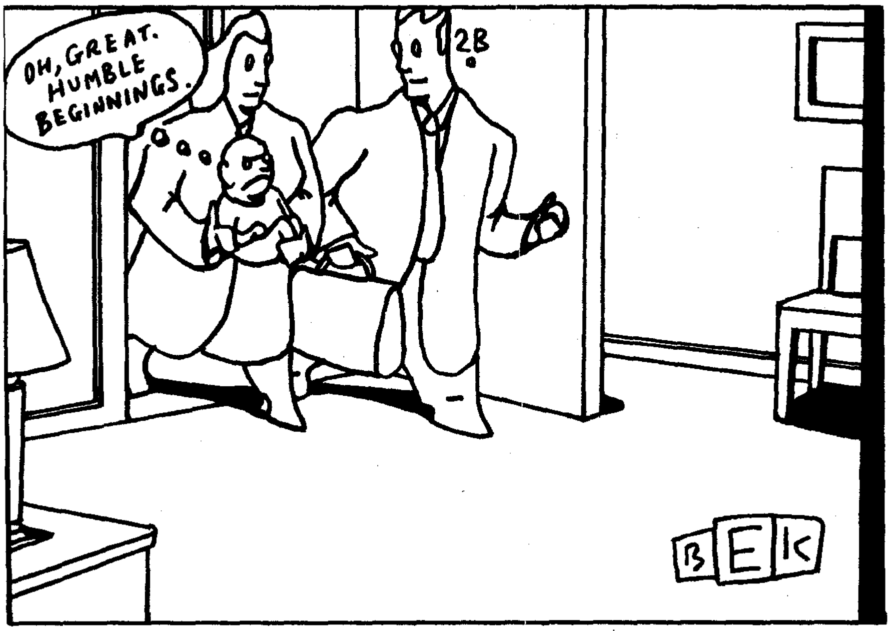
was making a nuisance of himself and that I had asked him repeatedly to call before he came and that he needed to just stay away, because he was just upsetting my staff." Hinckley did start to call. He told hospital investigators that he called as often as fifteen times in three weeks. Wick said he could call fifteen times a day, including many hang-up calls. Whatever the number of calls, Hinckley later acknowledged that he had become somewhat "infatuated" with Wick.

After Wick admonished Hinckley to stay away, he generally complied. In September, however, against her wishes, he delivered a package to her office, and she filed an official incident report. The complaint seemed minor, but an investigation of the relationship was conducted by the medical director of the John Howard Pavilion, who also happened to be Hinckley's psychiatrist. DeVeau saw the terror on Hinckley's face as the accusations grew. "It was like watching somebody crushed," she said. Both of them were certain that Hinckley would be returned to a maximum-security ward, which would mean no visits outside the visiting room. In the end, however, the psychiatrist determined that the incident was, at most,

COOL CUSTOMERS

During a turn in "The Iceman Cometh," Eugene O'Neill's despairing four-hour meditation on the hopelessness of hope, one well-known British actor developed such severe stagefright that he left the theatre for more than a decade. Kevin Spacey (leaping) is obviously made of stronger stuff. His performance as the madly optimistic hardware salesman Hickey, in Howard Davies's staging for the Almeida Theatre, was an outright favorite during the London season last year, and he shows no signs of flagging. The show opens on Broadway next week, with a supporting ensemble that includes holdovers from the Almeida original (Tim Pigott-Smith, James Hazeldine, and Clarke Peters, front row) and some notable American additions (Paul Giamatti, Robert Sean Leonard, Tony Danza, and Katie Finneran).

Photograph by Max Vadukul



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"an example of faulty judgment on Mr. Hinckley's part." He also concluded that Hinckley's version of the relationship was "the more accurate portrayal"—a surprising conclusion, given that Wick was a staff member. DeVeau was with Hinckley the day he heard this news. She burst out crying, and so did Hinckley. "That was the only time I saw tears in John's eyes," deVeau told me. She confessed that at one point she had become jealous of Wick, but Hinckley had assured her that he felt only friendship.

But the issue wasn't really resolved. In June of 1997, during a court hearing, Hinckley's relationship with Wick was cited by Judge June L. Green as a major reason for turning down his request to leave the grounds for field trips. The treatment team reported that there were "profound changes" in Hinckley, and that, while he still suffered mildly from a narcissistic personality disorder (something that doctors believe never fully disappears), his mental illnesses—his psychotic disorder and major depression—had been in remission for years. He had been off psychotropic medication since the spring of 1992. His treatment team supported his request. The hospital's review board, however, found the Wick report troubling, and prosecutors argued that frightening similarities existed between Hinckley's relationship with Wick and his obsession with Jodie Foster. One witness in particular seemed to impress the judge. Raymond Patterson, a former St. Elizabeths psychiatrist who had treated Hinckley until 1989—and who recently returned to the staff—testified that no one had been aware of Hinckley's obsession with Jodie Foster before he shot President Reagan. "There are two, it seems, poles in this matter," he said. "One is that Mr. Hinckley is in full remission, that he has no symptoms of illness, that he has essentially recovered his mental health. The other is that Mr. Hinckley has appeared that way before." At the end of a four-day hearing, Judge Green agreed with the prosecutors; she dismissed Hinckley's positive evaluations, saying, "His current status must be measured against the entire history of this case. The history in this case suggests a deceptive individual who has, in the past, deceived those treating him in ways too numerous to recount." She did so again, in December of 1997, when she turned down Hinckley's request—this time supported by the hospital review board—to have dinner with his parents, accompanied by hospital staff. (That was the decision reversed early this year by the appellate court.)

DeVeau had been particularly irked by a suggestion at the hearing that love songs on tapes that Hinckley gave Wick in 1995 had been written for Wick. In fact, all the songs but one—which was written for Wick's daughter—had been written for deVeau. "I was there when he did the songs," she told me. On the tape Hinckley, who has a sweet, reedy voice, sings:

> You were out in the world
> And out of my sight
> And you gave your love to me
> It was everything I imagined it would be
> And you gave your love to me
> It was forever.

If this latest round of hearings focussed on Hinckley and Jeannette Wick, the subtext was the psychologist Susan Lerner. In a closed hearing, the details of which have not previously been revealed, prosecutors announced that if Lerner testified on Hinckley's behalf the government would impeach her for bias. Lerner's son, they declared, had threatened to kill President Bush and Chelsea Clinton.

The revelation could not have been worse for Hinckley. Lerner was not his therapist, but she was the ward administrator, and she had seen him every day since 1992. She had written a fourteen-page report, signed by nine treatment-team members, that was central to his argument for his conditional release. "Dr. Lerner knows him better than anybody in that hospital," Barry Levine, Hinckley's lawyer, told me. Levine pointed out that Lerner was a government doctor, who had been assigned to Hinckley by government officials. "We took the government's doctors and made our case based on that.... They caused the contamination and then they say, 'My God, it's contaminated?' "

According to Lerner and to court records, Lerner's son made his first threat in 1991, following a suicide attempt. The son, who had been diagnosed with a bipolar disorder, discovered he was H.I.V.-positive, Lerner said, and had taken a drug overdose. (He died earlier this year.) "As they were pumping his stomach in the emergency room in the hospital, he was shouting something about a cure for AIDS and said, 'If they don't find a cure for AIDS I'm going to kill the President.' And some doctor took that seriously and called the Secret Service," Lerner said. After an investigation, the case was closed without a prosecution. Her son made his second alleged threat—to kill Chelsea Clinton—during an argument with his former therapist. In that case, too, prosecutors declined to bring charges.

At the time her son made the threat against Bush, Lerner had informed Thomas Polley, who was then the medical director of the John Howard Pavilion. She said she'd told Polley, " 'I'm telling you, Tom, because I know what the Service is going to find out. They're going to find out that John Hinckley is on my ward.' And Tom said, 'Don't worry about it. We'll take care of it. Everything's O.K. It's good you told me. I know your son is not a Presidential assassin.' " When Hinckley was transferred to a minimum-security ward, in 1992, hospital officials transferred Lerner, too. Lerner asks, "Why after John was transferred to minimum security would they transfer me down to the exact same ward? Because they weren't worried—because they knew there was nothing there." DeVeau said that Hinckley, who'd known nothing of the threats, had had no idea how much the revelation would hurt him. (Lerner did not testify.) "He sat there and watched the hearing fall apart and, of course, that was déjà vu, because every hearing he's ever had has fallen through for one thing or the other."

As it turned out, Hinckley's first court victory was to come thirteen months later, when the appellate court overturned Judge Green's ruling of December, 1997. In its decision, the panel noted that prosecutors had never before argued that a patient needed court approval before going on a supervised visit, as they were doing now. At the same time, the appellate court, remarking on the "nature and notoriety of his assassination attempt," said it was "abundantly clear that Hinckley faces a lengthy stay at St. Elizabeths Hospital."

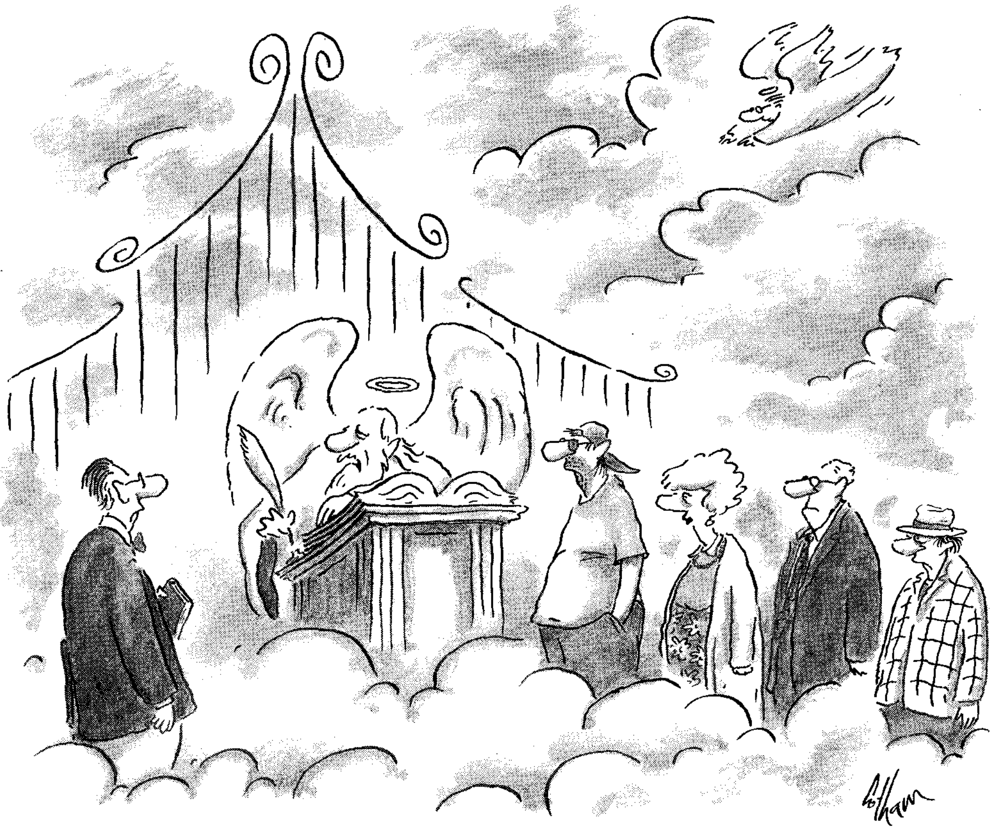
ONE day, I asked deVeau if it wouldn't be easier after all these years not to have a relationship with Hinckley. "John will say to me, 'If I weren't around you'd probably be married to some lawyer and live in the suburbs,' and the truth is that's not true," she replied. "I will never be just another person, because of what I bring with me and who I am." In most people's minds, she said, what she did is worse than what Hinckley did. "As I try and make up a life again, I am constantly, in one sense, having to keep many people further at bay, because emotionally I can't go through it with everyone."

During the months that we talked, deVeau answered my most intimate questions, but when I asked to see her apartment she always declined to show it. She explained that having me in her apartment would make her feel that she needed to entertain me. She and her former husband had entertained frequently, and, though she had been a good hostess, the role had always been stressful. Managing her life meant learning what caused stress and avoiding it.

Not long after this conversation, I asked her to take me to her daughter's grave. It was a cool morning when I pulled in to the driveway of her apartment building, and deVeau, who was waiting for me outside, clutched a pink carnation in her right hand. After she got into my car, she noticed a "Spot" book lying on the floor. "Is that new?" she asked. Her daughter's favorite book, she said, had been "Pat the Bunny." She proceeded to flawlessly recite the first few pages.

When we reached the cemetery, which is just across the District line, in Maryland, deVeau directed me around a winding series of curves until we reached Section E, in the chapel area. We got out of the car, and I followed deVeau down the sloping lawn. Midway, deVeau signalled that she had found the site. Grass had grown over the edges of a small bronze plaque, and some of the lettering had turned green, but I could easily read the two simple lines: "Erin Knight deVeau: 1972-1982." DeVeau bent over and laid the pink carnation directly on the plaque. "It used to be so hard looking at the dates," she said. "They are too short."

In one of our last conversations, deVeau told me, "I think as time goes by what makes it harder is I don't remember what it felt like to be really crazy. It's sort of like remembering what a shot is. You know intellectually that it hurts. So part of why I fight to stay well is because I don't ever want to get sick again, because it hurts. I think my point is that I face that battle every day. When I was thirty, I used to project my life ahead of me. I don't do things like that anymore." ♦



"No, this isn't a book signing."

FICTION

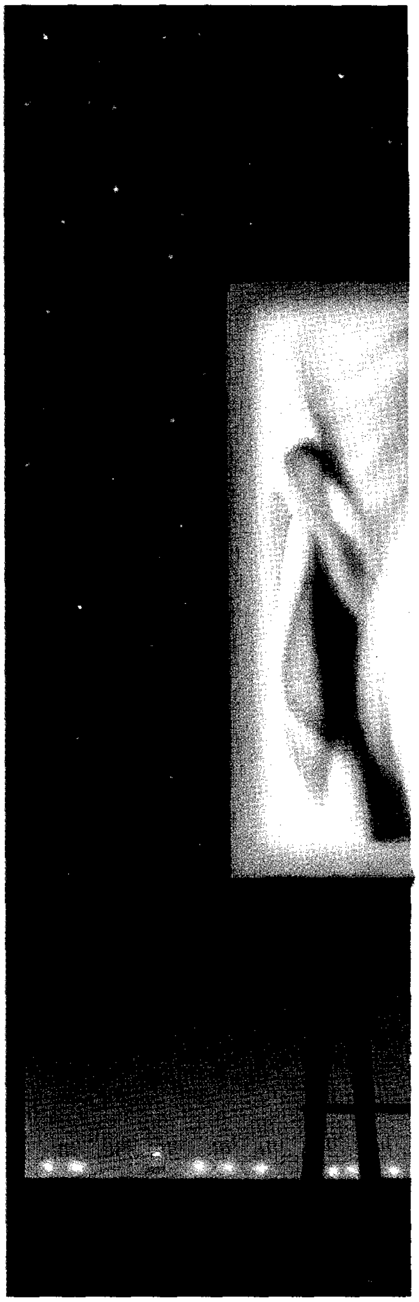
VINA DIVINA

As old as Virgil, as lyrical as Rilke, as hip as hip-hop.

BY SALMAN RUSHDIE

On St. Valentine's Day, 1989, the last day of her life, the legendary popular singer Vina Apsara woke sobbing from a dream of human sacrifice in which she had been the intended victim. Bare-torsoed men resembling the actor Christopher Plummer had been gripping her by the wrists and ankles. Her body was splayed out, naked and writhing, over a polished stone bearing the graven image of the snakebird Quetzalcoatl. The open mouth of the plumed serpent surrounded a dark hollow scooped out of the stone, and although her own mouth was stretched wide by her screams the only noise she could hear was the popping of flashbulbs; but before they could slit her throat, before her lifeblood could bubble into that terrible cup, she awoke at noon in the city of Guadalajara, Mexico, in an unfamiliar bed with a half-dead stranger by her side, a naked mestizo male in his early twenties, identified in the interminable press coverage that followed the catastrophe as Raúl Páramo, the playboy heir of a well-known local construction baron, one of whose corporations owned the hotel. She had been perspiring heavily and the sodden bedsheets stank of the meaningless misery of the nocturnal encounter. Raúl Páramo was unconscious, white-lipped, and his body was galvanized, every few moments, by spasms, which Vina recognized as being identical to her own dream writhings. After a few moments he began to make frightful noises deep in his windpipe, as if someone were slitting his throat, as if his blood were flowing out through the scarlet smile of an invisible wound into a phantom goblet. Vina, panicking, leapt from the bed, snatched up her clothes, the leather pants and gold-sequinned bustier in which she had made her final exit, the night before, from the stage of the city's convention center. Contemptuously, despairingly, she had surrendered herself to this nobody, this boy less than half her age. She had selected him more or less at random from the backstage throng, the lounge lizards, the slick, flower-bearing suitors, the industrial magnates, the aristotrash, the drug underlords, the tequila princes, all with limousines and champagne and cocaine and maybe even diamonds to bestow upon the evening's star.

The man had begun to introduce himself, to preen and fawn, but she didn't want to know his name or the size of his bank balance. She had picked him like a flower and now she wanted him between her teeth, she had ordered him like a take-home meal and now she alarmed him by the ferocity of her appetites, because she began to feast upon him the moment the door of the limo was closed, before the chauffeur had time to raise the partition that gave the passengers their privacy. Afterward he, the chauffeur, spoke with reverence of her naked body; while the newspapermen plied him with tequila he whispered about her swarming and predatory nudity as if it were a miracle, who'd have thought she was way the wrong side of forty, I guess somebody upstairs wanted to keep her just the way she was. I would have done anything for such a woman, the chauffeur moaned, I would have driven at two hundred kilometres per hour for her if it was speed she wanted, I would have crashed into a concrete wall for her if it had been her desire to die.



Only when she lurched into the eleventh-floor corridor of the hotel, half dressed and confused, stumbling over the unclaimed newspapers, whose headlines about French nuclear tests in the Pacific and political unrest in the southern province of Chiapas smudged the bare soles of her feet with their shrieking ink, only then did she understand that the suite of rooms she had abandoned was her own, she had slammed the door and didn't have the key, and it was lucky for her in that moment of vulnerability that the person she bumped into was me, Mr. Umeed Merchant, photographer, a.k.a. Rai, her so-to-speak chum ever since the old days in Bombay and the only shutterbug within a thousand and one miles who would not dream of photographing her in such delicious and scandalous disarray, her whole self momentarily out of focus and worst of all looking her age, the only image-stealer who would never have stolen from her that frayed and hunted look, that bleary and unarguably bag-eyed helplessness, her tangled fountain of wiry dyed-red hair quivering above her head in a woodpeckerish topknot, her lovely mouth trembling and uncertain, with the tiny fjords of the pitiless years deepening at the edges of her lips, the very archetype of the wild rock goddess

ANDREW VALKO, "MOVIE NIGHT" (1998)/NEWZONES, CALGARY, CANADA

halfway down the road to desolation and ruin. She had decided to become a redhead for this tour because at the age of forty-four she was making a new start, a solo career without Him, for the first time in years she was on the road without Ormus, her husband and partner in music, so it wasn't really surprising that she was disoriented and off balance most of the time. And lonely. It has to be admitted. Public life or private life, makes no difference, that's the truth: when she wasn't with him, it didn't matter who she was with, she was always alone.

Disorientation: loss of the East.

And it wasn't just dumb luck, her bumping into me. I was always there for her. Always looking out for her, always waiting for her call. If she'd wanted it, there would have been dozens of us, hundreds, thousands. But I believe there was only me. And the last time she called for help, I couldn't give it, and she died. She ended in the middle of the story of her life, she was an unfinished song abandoned at the bridge, deprived of the right to follow her life's verses to their final, fulfilling rhyme.

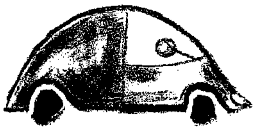
Two hours after I rescued her from the unfathomable chasm of her hotel corridor, a helicopter flew us to Tequila, where Don Ángel Cruz, the owner of one of the largest plantations of blue agave cactus and of the celebrated Ángel distillery, a gentleman fabled for the sweet amplitude of his countertenor voice, the great rotunda of his belly, and the lavishness of his hospitality, was scheduled to hold a banquet in her honor. Meanwhile, Vina's playboy lover had been taken to the hospital, in the grip of drug-induced seizures so extreme that they eventually proved fatal, and for days afterward, because of what happened to Vina, the world was treated to detailed analyses of the contents of the dead man's bloodstream, his stomach, his intestines, his scrotum, his eye sockets, his appendix, his hair, in fact everything except his brain, which was not thought to contain anything of interest, because it had been so thoroughly scrambled by narcotics that nobody could understand his last words, spoken during his final, comatose delirium. Some days later, however, when the information had found its way onto the Internet, a fantasy-fiction wonk nicknamed elrond@middlearth.com, hailing from the Castro district of San Francisco, explained that Raúl Páramo had been speaking Orcish, the infernal speech devised for the servants of the Dark Lord Sauron by the writer Tolkien: *Ash nazg durbatulûk, ash nazg gimbatul, ash nazg thrakatulûk agh burzum-ishi krimpatul.* After that, rumors of Satanic, or perhaps Sauronic, practices spread unstoppably across the Web. The idea was put about that the mestizo lover had been a devil worshipper, a blood servant of the Underworld, and had given Vina Apsara a priceless but malignant ring, which had caused the subsequent catastrophe and dragged her down to Hell. But by then Vina was already passing into myth, becoming a vessel into which any moron could pour his stupidities, or let us say a mirror of the culture, and we can best understand the nature of this culture if we say that it found its truest mirror in a corpse.

One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them, One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them. I sat next to Vina Apsara in the helicopter to Tequila, and I saw no ring on her finger, except for the talismanic moonstone she always wore, her link to Ormus Cama, her reminder of his love.

She had sent her entourage by road, selecting me as her only aerial companion. "Of all you bastards he's the only one I can trust," she'd snarled. They had set off an hour ahead of us, the whole damn zoo, her serpentine tour manager, her hyena of a personal assistant, the security gorillas, the peacock of a hairdresser, the publicity dragon, but now, as the chopper swooped over their motorcade, the darkness that had enveloped her since our departure seemed to lift, and she ordered the pilot to make a series of low passes over the cars below, lower and lower. I saw his eyes widen with fear, the pupils were black pinpricks, but he was under her spell like all of us, and did her bidding. I was the one yelling "Higher! Get higher!" into the microphone attached to our ear-defender headsets, while her laughter clattered in my ears like a door banging in the wind, and when I looked across at her to tell her I was scared I saw that she was weeping. The police had been surprisingly gentle with her when they arrived at the scene of Raúl Páramo's overdose, contenting themselves with cautioning her that she might become the subject of an investigation herself. Her lawyers had terminated the encounter at that point, but afterward she looked stretched, unstable, too bright, as if she were on the point of flying apart like an exploding light bulb, like a supernova, like the universe.

Then we were past the vehicles and flying over the hills and valleys turned smoky blue by the agave plantations, and her mood swung again, she began to giggle into her microphone and to insist that we were taking her to a place that did not exist, a fantasy location, a wonderland, because how was it possible that there could be a place called Tequila, "It's like saying that whiskey comes from Whiskey, or gin is made in Gin," she cried. "Is the Vodka a river in Russia? Do they make rum in Rúm?" And then, suddenly darkening, her voice dropping low, becoming almost inaudible beneath the noise of the rotors, "And heroin comes from heroes, and crack from the Crack of Doom." It was possible that I was hearing the birth of a song. Afterward, when the captain and co-pilot were interviewed about her helicopter ride, they loyally refused to divulge any details of that in-flight monologue in which she swung moment by moment between elation and despair. "She was in high spirits," they said, "and spoke in English, so we did not understand."

Not only in English. Because it was only me, she could prattle on in Bombay's garbage argot, *Mumbai ki kochrapati baat-cheet*, in which a sentence could begin in one language, swoop through a second and even a third, and then swing back round to the first. Our acronymic name for it was Hugme. Hindi Urdu Gujarati Marathi English. Bombayites like me were people who spoke five languages badly and no language well.



Separated from Ormus Cama on this tour, Vina had discovered the limitations, musical and verbal, of her own material. She had written new songs to show off that celestial voice of hers, that multiple-octave, Yma Sumac stairway to heaven of an instrument that, she now claimed, had never been sufficiently stretched by Ormus's compositions; but in Buenos Aires, São Paulo, Mexico City, and Guadalajara she heard for herself the public's tepid response to these songs, in spite of the presence of her three demented Brazilian percussionists and her pair of duelling Argentine guitarists, who threatened to end each performance with a knife fight. Even the guest appearance of the veteran Mexican superstar Chico Estefan had failed to enthuse her audiences; instead, his surgery-smoothed face with its mouthful of unreal teeth only drew attention to her own fading youth, which was mirrored in the average age of the crowds. The kids had not come, or not enough of them, not nearly enough.

But roars of acclaim followed each of the old hits from the VTO back catalogue, and the inescapable truth was that during these numbers the percussionists' madness came closest to divinity, the duelling guitars spiralled upward toward the sublime, and even the old roué Estefan seemed to come back from his green pastures over the hill. Vina Apsara sang Ormus Cama's words and music, and at once the minority of youngsters in the audiences perked up and started going crazy, the crowds' thousand thousand hands began moving in unison, forming in sign language the name of the great band, in time to their thundering cheers: *"V! T! O! V! T! O!"*

Go back to him, they were saying. We need you to be together. Don't throw your love away. Instead of breaking up, we wish that you were making up again.

Vertical Take-Off. Or Vina To Ormus. Or "We two" translated into Hugme as V-to. Or a reference to the V-2 rocket. Or V for peace, for which they longed, and T for two, the two of them, and O for love, their love. Or a homage to one of the great buildings of Ormus's home town: Victoria Terminus Orchestra. Or a name invented long ago when Vina saw a neon sign for the old-time soft drink Vimto, with only three letters illuminated, Vimto without the "im."

V... T... Ohh.
V... T... Ohh.

Two shrieks and a sigh. The orgasm of the past, whose ring she wore on her finger. To which perhaps she knew she must, in spite of me, return.

THE afternoon heat was dry and fierce, which she loved. Before we landed, the pilot had been informed of mild earth tremors in the region, but they had passed, he reassured us, there was no reason to abort the landing.

Then he cursed the French. "After each one of those tests you can count five days, one, two, three, four, five, and the ground shakes." He set the helicopter down in a dusty football field in the center of the little town of Tequila. What must have been the town's entire police force was keeping the local population at bay. As Vina Apsara majestically descended (always a princess, she was growing into queenliness) a cry went up, just her name, *Veeenaaa*, the vowels elongated by pure longing, and I recognized, not for the first time, that in spite of all the hyperbolic revelry and public display of her life, in spite of all her star antics, her *nakhras*, she was never resented, something in her manner disarmed people, and what bubbled out of them instead of bile was a miraculous, unconditional affection, as if she were the whole earth's very own newborn child.

"There's been a change in plans. Instead of Abilene, we're going to Camelot."

Call it love.

Small boys burst through the cordon, chased by perspiring cops, and then there was Don Ángel Cruz with his two silver Bentleys that exactly matched the color of his hair, apologizing for not greeting us with an aria, but the dust, the unfortunate dust, it is always a difficulty but now with the tremor the air is full of it, please, Señora, Señor, and with a small cough against the back of his wrist he shepherded us into the lead Bentley, we will go at once, please, and commence the program. He seated himself in the second vehicle, mopping himself with giant kerchiefs, the huge smile on his face held there by a great effort of will. You could almost see the heaving distraction beneath that surface of a perfect host. "That's a worried man," I said to Vina as our car drove toward the plantation. She shrugged. She had crossed the Oakland Bay Bridge going west in October, 1984, test-driving a luxury car for a promotional feature in *Vanity Fair*, and on the far side she drove into a gas station, climbed out of the car, and saw it lift off the ground, all four wheels, and hang there in the air like something from the future, or "Back to the Future," anyway. At that moment the Bay Bridge was collapsing like a children's toy. Therefore, "Don't you earthquake me," she said to me in her tough-broad, disaster-vet voice as we arrived at the plantation, where Don Ángel's employees waited with straw cowboy hats to shield us from the sun and machete maestros prepared to demonstrate how one hacked an agave plant down into a big blue "pineapple" ready for the pulping machine. "Don't try and Richter me, Rai, honey. I been scaled before."

The animals were misbehaving. Brindled mongrels ran in circles, yelping, and there was a whinnying of horses. Oracular birds wheeled noisily overhead. Subcutaneous seismic activity increased, too, beneath the increasingly distended affability of Don Ángel Cruz as he dragged us round the distillery: These are our traditional wooden vats, and here are our shining new technological marvels, our capital investment for the future, our enormous investment, our investment beyond price. Fear had begun to ooze from him in globules of rancid sweat. Absently he dabbed his sodden hankies at the odorous flow, and in the bottling plant his eyes widened further with misery as he gazed upon the fragility of his fortune, liquid cradled in glass, and the fear of an earthquake began to seep damply from the corners of his eyes.

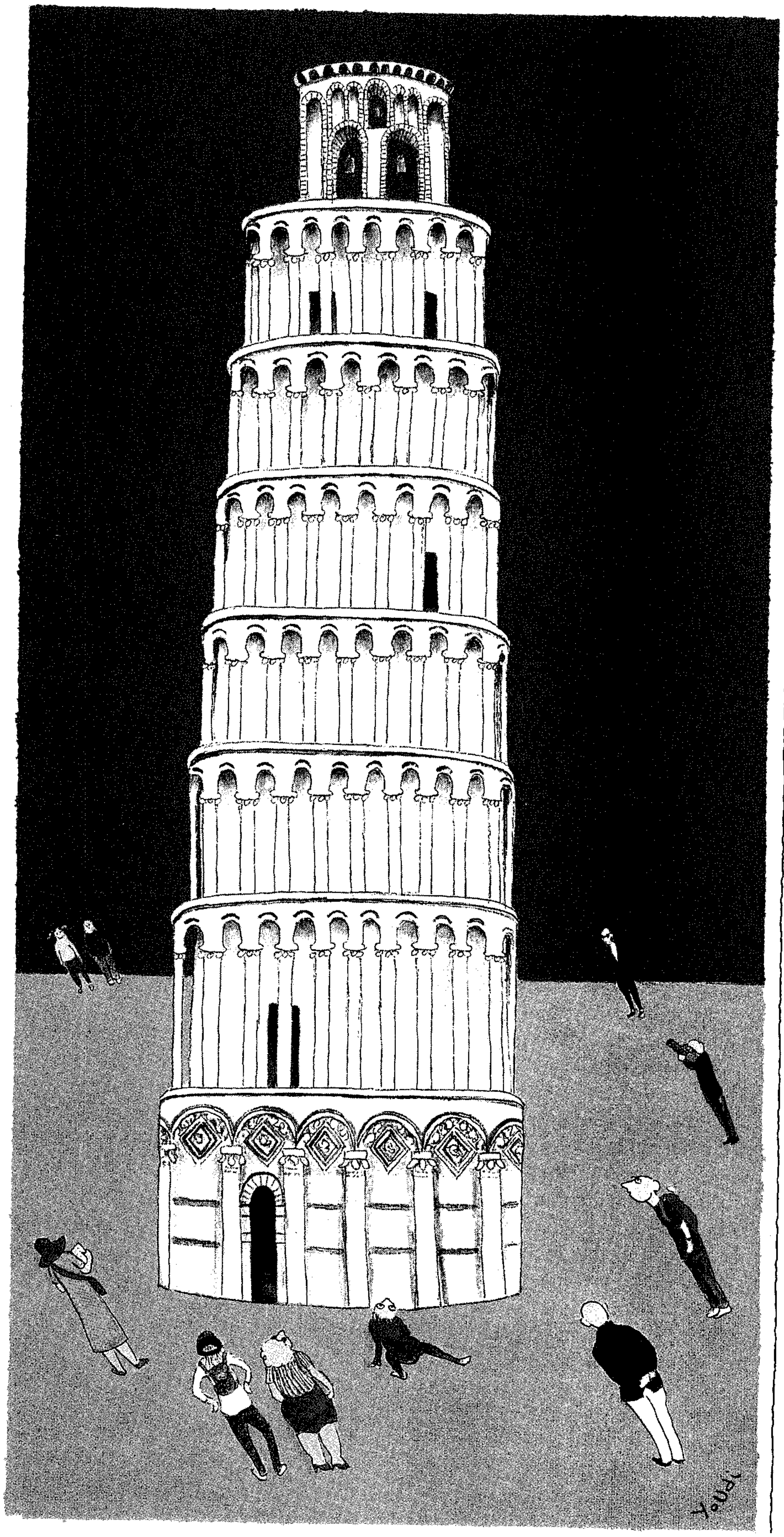
"Sales of French wines and liqueurs have been down since the testing began, maybe as much as twenty per cent," he muttered, shaking his head. "The wineries of Chile and our own people here in Tequila have both been beneficiaries. Export demand has shot up to such a degree you would not credit it." He wiped his eyes with the back of an unsteady hand. "Why should God give us such a gift only to take it away again? Why must He test our faith?" He peered at us, as if we might genuinely be able to offer him an answer. When he understood that no answer was available, he clutched suddenly at Vina Apsara's hands, he became a supplicant at her court, driven to this act of excessive familiarity by the force of his great need. She made no attempt to free herself from his grasp.

"I have not been a bad man," Don Ángel said to Vina, in imploring tones, as if he were praying to her. "I have been fair to my employees and amiable to my children and even faithful to my wife, excepting only, let me be honest, a couple of small incidents, and these were maybe twenty years ago, Señora, you are a sophisticated lady, you can understand the weaknesses of middle age. Why then should such a day come to me?" He actually bowed his head before her, relinquishing her hands now to lock his own together and rest them fearfully against his teeth.

She was used to giving absolution. Placing her freed hands on his shoulders, she began to speak to him in That Voice, she began to murmur to him as if they were lovers, dismissing the feared earthquake like a naughty child, sending it to stand in the corner, forbidding it to create

SKETCHBOOK BY YOUDI DES AUBRYS

UNTILTED



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any trouble for the excellent Don Ángel, and such were the miracle powers, of the sound of her voice more than anything it might have been saying, that the distressed fellow actually stopped sweating and, with a hesitant, tentative rebirth of good cheer, raised his cherubic head and smiled. "Good," said Vina Apsara. "Now let's have lunch."

At the family firm's old hacienda, which was nowadays used only for great feasts such as this, we found a long table set in the cloisters overlooking a fountained courtyard, and, as Vina entered, a mariachi band began to play. Then the motorcade arrived, and out tumbled the whole appalling menagerie of the rock world, squealing and flurrying, knocking back their host's vintage tequila as if it were beer from a party can, or wine-in-a-box, and boasting about their ride through the earth tremors, the tour manager hissing hatred at the unstable earth, as if he were planning to sue it, the personal assistant laughing with glee, the peacock flouncing and exclamatory, the gorillas grunting monosyllabically, the Argentine guitarists at each other's throats as usual, and the drummers—ach, drummers!—shutting out the memory of their panic by launching into a tequila-lubricated series of high-volume criticisms of the mariachi band, whose leader, resplendent in a black-and-silver outfit, hurled his sombrero to the floor and was on the point of reaching for the silver six-gun strapped to his thigh when Don Ángel intervened and, to promote a convivial spirit, offered benevolently, "Please. If you permit it, I will intent, for your diversion, to sing."

A genuine countertenor voice silences all arguments, its sidereal sweetness shaming our pettiness, like the music of the spheres. Don Ángel Cruz gave us Gluck, "Trionfi Amore," and the mariachi singers did a creditable job as Chorus to his Orfeo:

Trionfi Amore
E il mondo intero
Serva all'impero
Della beltà.

The unhappy conclusion of the Orpheus story, Eurydice lost forever because of Orpheus' backward look, was always a problem for composers and their librettists. Hey, Calzabigi, what's this ending you're giving me here? Such a downer, I should send folks home with their faces long like a wurst? Hello? Happy it up, *ja!* —Sure, Herr Gluck, don't get so agitato. No problem! Love, it is stronger than Hades. Love, it make the gods merciful. How's about they send her back anyway? "Get outta here, kid, the guy's crazy for you! What's one little peek?" Then the lovers throw a party, and what a party! Dancing, wine, the whole nine yards. So you got your big finish, everybody goes out humming—works for me. —Nice going, Rainieri. —Sure thing, Willibald. Forget about it.

And here it was, that showstopper finale. Love's triumph over death. *The whole world obeys the rule of beauty.* To everyone's astonishment, mine included, Vina Apsara the rock star rose to her feet and sang both soprano parts, Amore as well as Eurydice, and though I'm no expert she sounded word and note perfect, her voice in an ecstasy of fulfillment: Finally, it seemed to be saying, you've worked out what I'm for.

> E quel sospetto
> Che il cor tormenta,
> Alfin diventa
> Felicità.

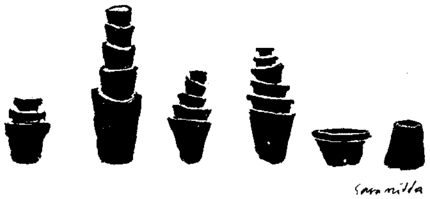
The tormented heart doesn't just find happiness, O.K.: it *becomes* happiness. That's the story, anyway. That's the way the song goes.

THE earth began to shake just as she finished, applauding her performance. The great still-life of the banquet, the plates of meats and bowls of fruits and bottles of the best Cruz tequila, and even the banquet table itself, now commenced to jump and dance in Disney fashion, inanimate objects animated by the little sorcerer's apprentice, that overweening mouse; or as if moved by the sheer power of her song to join in the closing chaconne. As I try to remember the exact sequence of events, I find that my memory has become a silent movie. There must have been noise. Pandemonium, city of devils and their torments, could scarcely have been noisier than that Mexican town, as cracks scurried like lizards along the walls of its buildings, prying apart the walls of Don Ángel's hacienda with their long creepy fingers, until it simply fell away like an illusion, a movie façade, and through the surging dust cloud of its collapse we were returned to the pitching, bucking streets, running for our lives, not knowing which way to run but running anyway, while tiles fell from roofs and trees were flung into the air and sewage burst upward from the streets and houses exploded and suitcases long stored in attics began to rain down from the sky.

But I remember only silence, the silence of great horror. The silence, to be more exact, of photography, because that was my profession, so naturally it was what I turned to the moment the earthquake began. All my thoughts were of the little squares of film passing through my old cameras—Voigtlander, Leica, Pentax; of the forms and colors being registered therein by the accidents of movement and event, and of course by the skill or lack of it with which I managed to point the lens in the right or wrong direction at the wrong or right time. Here was the eternal silence of faces and bodies and animals and even nature itself, caught—yes—by my camera, but caught also in the grip of the fear of the unforeseeable and the anguish of loss, in the clutches of this hated metamorphosis, the appalling silence of a way of life at the moment of its annihilation, its transformation into a golden past that could never wholly be rebuilt, because once you have been in an earthquake you know, even if you survive without a scratch, that like a stroke in the heart it remains in the earth's breast, horribly potential, always promising to return, to hit you again, with an even more devastating force.

A photograph is a moral decision taken in an eighth of a second, or a fifteenth, or a hundred-and-twenty-fifth. Snap your fingers; a snapshot's faster. Halfway between voyeur and witness, high artist and low scum, that's where I've made my life, making my eyeblink choices. That's O.K., that's cool. I'm still alive, and I've been spat at and called names only a couple of hundred times. I can live with the name-calling. It's the men with the heavy weaponry who worry me. (And they are men, almost always, all those arnolds carrying terminators, all those zealous suicidists with their toilet-brush beards and no hair on their baby-naked upper lips; but when women do such work they're often worse.)

Long ago I developed a knack for invisibility. It allowed me to go right up to the actors in the world's drama, the sick, the dying, the crazed, the mourning, the rich, the greedy, the ecstatic, the bereft, the angry, the murderous, the secretive, the bad, the children, the good, the newsworthy; to shimmy into their charmed space, into the midst of their rage or grief or transcendent arousal, to penetrate the defining instant of their being-in-the-world and get my fucking picture. On many occasions this gift of dematerialization has saved my life. When people said to me, Do not drive down that sniper-infested road, do not enter that warlord's stronghold, you'd do well to circumnavigate that militia's fiefdom, I was drawn toward it almost irresistibly. Nobody has ever gone in there with a camera and come out alive, somebody would warn, and at once I'd head off past the checkpoint of no return. When I got back people looked at me oddly, as if seeing a ghost, and asked how I managed it. I shook my head. Truthfully, I often didn't know. Perhaps if I knew I wouldn't be able to do it anymore and then I'd get killed in some half-baked combat zone. One day that may happen.



I've never been invisible to the earth's little creatures, however. Those six-legged dwarf terrorists have got my number, no question about it. Show me (or, preferably, don't show me) an ant, lead me (don't lead me) to a wasp, a bee, a mosquito, a flea. It'll have me for breakfast; also for other, more substantial repasts. What's small and bites, bites me. So at a certain moment in the heart of the earthquake, as I photographed a lost child crying for her parents, I was stung, once, hard, as if by conscience, on the cheek, and as I jerked my face away from my camera I was just in time (thank you, I guess, to whatever horrible *aguijón*-wielding thing it was; not conscience, probably, but a snapper's sixth sense) to see the beginning of the tequila flood. The town's many giant storage vats had burst.

THE streets were like whips, snaking and cracking. The Ángel distillery was one of the first to succumb to this lashing. Old wood burst open, new metal buckled and split. The urinous river of tequila made its frothing way into the lanes of the town, the leading wave of the torrent overtook the fleeing populace and turned it head over heels, and such was the potency of the brew that those who swallowed mouthfuls of that angelic surf came up not only wet and gasping but drunk. The last time I saw Don Ángel Cruz, he was scurrying in the tequila-drowning squares with a saucepan in his hand and two kettles on strings slung around his neck, trying pathetically to save what he could.

This is how people behave when their dailiness is destroyed, when for a few moments they see, plain and unadorned, one of the great shaping forces of life. Calamity fixes them with her mesmeric eye, and they begin to scoop and paw at the rubble of their days, trying to pluck the memory of the quotidian—a toy, a book, a garment, even a photograph—from the garbage heaps of the irretrievable, of their overwhelming loss. Don Ángel Cruz turned panhandler was the childlike, fabulous image I needed, a figure eerily reminiscent of the surreal Saucepan Man from some of Vina Apsara's favorite books, the Faraway Tree series of Enid Blyton, which travelled with her wherever she went. Cloaking myself in invisibility, I began to shoot.

I don't know how long all this took. The shaking table, the collapse of the hacienda, the roller-coaster streets, the people gasping and tumbling in the tequila river, the descent of hysteria, the deathly laughter of the unhoused, the bankrupted, the unemployed, the orphaned, the dead . . . Ask me to put an estimate on it and I'd come up empty. Twenty seconds? Half an hour? Search me. The invisibility cloak, and my trick of switching off all my other senses and channelling all my powers of perception through my mechanical eyes—these things have, as they say, a downside. When I'm facing the enormities of the actual, when that great monster is roaring into my lens, I lose control of other things. What time is it? Where is Vina? Who's dead? Who's alive? Is that an abyss opening beneath my combat boots? What did you say? There's a medical team trying to reach this dying woman? What are you talking about? Why are you getting in my way, who the fuck do you think you're trying to push around? *Can't you see I'm working?*

Who was alive? Who was dead? Where was Vina? Where was Vina? Where was Vina?

I snapped out of it. Insects stung my neck. The torrent of tequila ceased, the precious river drained away into the cracking earth. The town looked like a picture postcard torn up by an angry child and then painstakingly reassembled by its mother. It had acquired the quality of brokenness, had become kin to the great family of the broken: broken plates, broken dolls, broken English, broken promises, broken hearts. Vina Apsara lurched toward me through the dust. "Rai, thank God." For all her fooling with Buddhist wise men (Rinpoche Hollywood and the Ginsberg Lama) and Krishna Consciousness cymbalists and Tantric gurus (those kundalini flashers) and Transcendental™ rishis and masters of this or that crazy wisdom, Zen and the Art of the Deal, the Tao of Promiscuous Sex, Self-Love and Enlightenment, for all her spiritual faddishness, I always in my own godless way found it hard to believe that she actually believed in an actually existing god. But she probably did; I was probably wrong about that, too; and, anyway, what other word is there? When there's that gratitude in you for life's dumb luck, when there's nobody to thank and you need to thank somebody, what do you say? God, Vina said. The word sounded to me like a way of disposing of emotion. It was a place to put something that had no place else to go.

From the sky, a larger insect bore down upon us, burdening us with the insistent downdraft of its raucous wings. The helicopter had taken off just in time to escape destruction. Now the pilot brought it down almost to ground zero and beckoned, hovering. "Let's get out of here!" Vina shouted. I shook my head. "You go!" I yelled back at her. Work before play. I had to get my pictures onto the wires. "I'll see you later!" I bellowed. "What?" "Later!" "What?"

The plan had been for the helicopter to fly us, for a weekend's relaxation, to a remote villa on the Pacific coast, the Villa Huracán, co-owned by the president of the Colchis record company and located to the north of Puerto Vallarta, in privileged isolation, sandwiched like a magic kingdom between the jungle and the sea. Now there was no way of knowing if the villa still stood. The world had changed. Yet, like the townspeople clinging to their framed photographs, like Don Ángel with his saucepans, Vina Apsara clung to the idea of continuity, of the prearranged itinerary. She was staying with the program. Until my kidnapped images were off to the world's news desks to be ransomed, however, there could be no tropical Shangri-La for me.

"I'm going, then!" she screamed.

"I can't go!"

"What?"

"Go!"

"Fuck you!"

"What?"

Then she was in the helicopter, and it was rising, and I had not gone with her, and I never saw her again, none of us did, and the last words she screamed down at me break my heart every time I think of them, and I think of them a few hundred times a day, every day, and then there are the endless, sleepless nights.

"Goodbye, Hope."

I BEGAN to use the work name Rai when I was taken on by the famous Nebuchadnezzar Agency. Pseudonyms, stage names, work names: for writers, for actors, for spies, these are useful masks, hiding or altering one's true identity. But when I began to call myself Rai, "prince," it felt like removing a disguise, because I was letting the world in on my most cherished secret, which was that ever since childhood this had been Vina's private pet name for me, the badge of my puppy love. "Because you carry yourself like a little rajah," she'd told me, fondly, when I was only nine and had braces on my teeth, "so it's only your friends who know you're just some no-account jerk."

But never mind that just now. *Rai.* It also meant desire: a man's personal inclination, the direction he chose to go in; and will, the force of a man's character. All that I liked. I liked that it was a name that travelled easily; everyone could say it, it sounded good on every tongue. And if on occasion I turned into "Hey, Ray" in that mighty democracy of mispronunciation the United States, then I was not disposed to argue, I just took the plum assignments and left town. And in another part of the world Rai was music. In the home of this music, alas, religious fanatics have lately started killing the musicians. They think the music is an insult to god, who gave us voices but does not wish us to sing, who gave us free will, *rai*, but prefers us not to be free.

Anyway, now everybody says it: Rai. Just the one name, it's easy, it's a style. Most people don't even know my real name. Umeed Merchant, did I mention that? Umeed Merchant, raised in a different universe, a different dimension of time, in a bungalow on Cuffe Parade, Bombay, which burned down long ago. The name Merchant, I should perhaps explain, means "merchant." Bombay families often bear names derived from some deceased ancestor's line of work. Engineers, Contractors, Doctors. And let's not forget the Readymoneys, the Cashondeliveris, the Fishwalas. And a Mistry is a mason and a Wadia is a shipbuilder and a lawyer is a Vakil and a banker is a Shroff. And from the thirsty city's long love affair with aerated drinks comes not only Batliwala but also Sodawaterbatliwala, and not only Sodawaterbatliwala but Sodawaterbatli*opener*wala, too.

Cross my heart and hope to die.

"Goodbye, Hope," cried Vina, and the helicopter went into a steep banking climb and was gone.

Umeed, you see. Noun, feminine. Meaning hope.

WHY do we care about singers? Wherein lies the power of songs? Maybe it derives from the sheer strangeness of there being singing in the world. The note, the scale, the chord; melodies, harmonies, arrangements, symphonies, ragas, Chinese operas, jazz, the blues: that such things should exist, that we should have discovered the magical intervals and distances that yield the poor cluster of notes, all within the span of a human hand, from which we can build our cathedrals of sound, is as alchemical a mystery as mathematics, or wine, or love. Maybe the birds taught us. Maybe not. Maybe we are just creatures in search of exaltation. We don't have much of it. Our lives are not what we deserve; they are, let us agree, in many painful ways deficient. Song turns them into something else. Song shows us a world that is worthy of our yearning, it shows us our selves as they might be, if we were worthy of the world.

Five mysteries hold the keys to the unseen: the act of love, and the birth of a baby, and the contemplation of great art, and being in the presence of death or disaster, and hearing the human voice lifted in song. These are the occasions when the bolts of the universe fly open and we are given a glimpse of what is hidden; an "eff" of the ineffable. Glory bursts upon us in such hours: the dark glory of earthquakes, the slippery wonder of new life, the radiance of Vina's singing.

Vina, to whom even strangers would come, following her star, hoping to receive redemption from her voice, her large, damp eyes, her touch. How was it that so explosive, even amoral a woman came to be seen as an emblem, an ideal, by more than half the population of the world? Because she was no angel, let me tell you that, but try saying so to Don Ángel. Maybe it's just as well she was not born a Christian, or they'd have tried to make her a saint. Our Lady of the Stadiums, our arena madonna, baring her scars to the masses like Alexander the Great rousing his soldiers for war; our plastered Unvirgin, bleeding red tears from her eyes and hot music from her throat. As we retreat from religion, our ancient opiate, there are bound to be withdrawal symptoms, there will be many side effects of this Apsaran variety. The habit of worship is not easily broken. In the museums, the rooms with the icons are crowded. We always did prefer our iconic figures injured, stuck full of arrows or crucified upside down; we need them flayed and naked, we want to watch their beauty crumble slowly and to observe their narcissistic grief. Not in spite of their faults but *for* their faults we adore them, worshipping their weaknesses, their pettinesses, their bad marriages, their substance abuse, their spite. Seeing ourselves in Vina's mirror, and forgiving her, we also forgave ourselves. She redeemed us by her sins.

Do you know the Fourth Georgic of the bard of Mantua, P. Vergilius Maro? Ormus Cama's father, the redoubtable Sir Darius Xerxes Cama, classicist and honey lover, knew his Virgil, and through him I learned some, too. Sir Darius was an Aristaeus admirer, of course; Aristaeus, the first beekeeper in world literature, whose unwelcome advances to the dryad Eurydice led her to step on a snake, whereupon the wood nymph perished and mountains wept. Virgil's treatment of the Orpheus story is extraordinary: he tells it in seventy-six blazing lines, writing with all the stops pulled out, and then, in a perfunctory thirty lines more, he allows Aristaeus to perform his expiatory ritual sacrifice, and that's that, end of poem, no more need to worry about those foolish doomed lovers. The real hero of the poem is the keeper of bees; the "Arcadian master," the maker of a miracle far greater than that wretched

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Thracian singer's art, which could not even raise his lover from the dead. This is what Aristaeus could do: *he could spontaneously generate new bees from the rotting carcass of a cow.* His was "the heavenly gift of honey from the air."

Well, then. And Don Ángel could produce tequila from blue agave. And I, Umeed Merchant, photographer, can spontaneously generate new meaning from the putrefying carcass of what is the case. Mine is the hellish gift of conjuring response, feeling, perhaps even comprehension, from uncaring eyes, by placing before them the silent faces of the real. I, too, am compromised, no man knows better than I how irredeemably. Nor are there any sacrifices I can perform, or gods I can propitiate. Yet my names mean "hope" and "will," and that counts for something, right? Vina, am I right?

Sure, baby. Sure, Rai, honey. It counts.

In my last photograph of Vina the ground beneath her feet is cracked like crazy paving and there's liquid everywhere. She's standing on a slab of street that's tilting to the right; she's bending left to compensate. Her arms are spread wide, her hair's flying, the expression on her face is halfway between anger and fear. Behind her the world is out of focus. There is a sense of eruptions all around her lurching body: great releases of water, terror, fire, tequila, dust. This last Vina is calamity incarnate, a woman in extremis, who is also by chance one of the most famous women in the world.

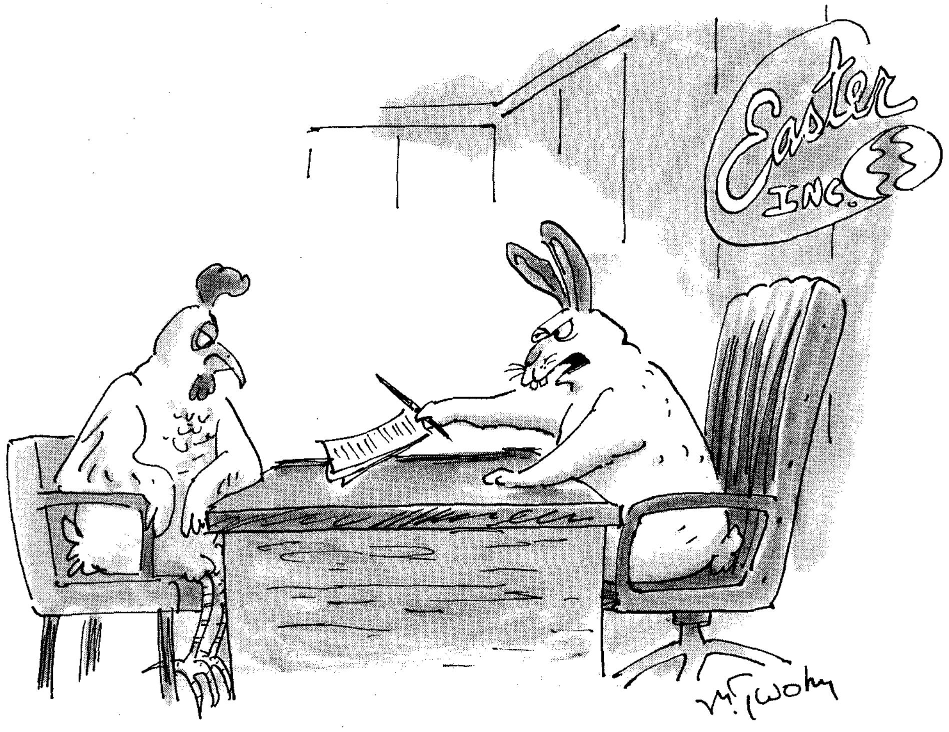
After the disappearance of Vina Apsara at the Villa Huracán, my earthquake picture will join that small stock of photographic images—Monroe's flying skirt, the burning girl in Indochina, Earthrise—that actually *become experiences*, part of the collective memory of the human race. Like every photographer, I have hoped to end my days with my name attached to a few powerful images, but the Vina picture will outstrip even my most ambitious, self-glorifying aspirations. The Lady Vanishes, as it will come to be known, will surely be my bitter posterity. If I am remembered at all, it can only be for this. So in one sense, at least, Vina and I will be joined together forever, in spite of everything, a consummation for which I've wished, all my life, even more devoutly than I've wished for professional success. Yes, we're linked for all time, beyond hope, beyond life: metamorphosed by the Immense into the Eternal. But I was wrong about the nature of the metamorphic force working its marvels upon us. In our case, it was not love but death. Be careful what you wish for.

You can have the fucking photo. I want her back.

Also, because the picture will first appear alongside news reports of what I keep calling her disappearance because I'm finding it hard to use the other word, it will be permanently associated in the public mind with that final moment of terror. This is how people are. Even though we all know there could not have been a photographer present at Vina's end, we accept the authenticity of the image without much trouble. My picture of Vina in a heaving Tequila street mutates under the pressure of the world's need for last things, under the pressure of this global manifestation of the Immense, into a portrait of the star at the moment of her, say it, death.

So it's a sort of unintentional fake. Another fraud. And though I will try to set the record straight, telling the story of the photograph over and over again, nobody will really be listening. They will already know all they need to know. The Lady Vanishes. The world has made up its mind.

What the pilot says on Televisa: Señora, we took her over the mountains to the seacoast and everywhere below us was a destruction to break the heart. Our thoughts were urgent for our own families, it is true, but we discharge our duty to the end. Our calls ahead to the Villa Huracán were not fulfilled, the telephone was out of service, but the famous personage she insisted on going forward with the arrangement, always she was saying faster, can you not get there in a faster time. For her, to whom what man could say no, we have made our best effort, and when we come to El Huracán it appears she has been blessed with fortune, all is intact, in all our broken motherland this one corner has remained whole to receive herself. As was our prearranged plan, we land on the sand at the foot of the cliff and she will climb up to Huracán. But on the beach is nobody to carry her baggages which you can easily imagine are plentiful for she is a fashionable one. Of course we can carry the bags, no problem, but understand, sirs, we are concerned for the machine and also, I confess it, there is a great desire to see once more my wife and sons in Acatlán. Also the personage she is insistent and is a personage of much force of expression, you comprehend, and so it is in compliance with her own desire



"May I remind you that we can always go with duck eggs."

that her baggages are reposed on the first step of the *escalinata* to the height and we say our farewells and that is the finish of it. —Excuse, please? —But naturally we were concerned for her safety. It is why we have made two circles over the establishment and have not departed until we have seen him, the other individual who was there. —No, regrettably, other than the distinguished lady personage on the sand we cannot identify any other person. However, we have no way left her unattended. That is a scurrilous imputation. The situation at El Huracán at that point is still normal. By the time we leave no misadventure of any type is to be observed.

The Colchis boss Mo Malick talks to Larry King on CNN. His shoulder-length blond hair, his earnest glasses, his fabulous profile. Excerpts: Sure, Larry, we were scared, I can admit that, who wouldn't be? . . . The house has, or I guess that should be had, that's still so hard to say, it *had* its own generator, so we had some quantity of power, but the phones, the water, that stuff was all down, for the whole coastline as it transpired, I'm telling you these were major heaves. . . . And I had guests, Larry, Chile's probably greatest living writer and his lovely American wife, these were responsibilities also, and what can I say, it simply never occurred to me that she'd make the trip, you know what I mean? It wasn't the moment for a few super days by the old Pacific Sea. Listen, the staff were out of there, I mean like bats out of, not meaning any disrespect, I understand how they felt, I'd probably have done the same myself, but they were *gone.* And I'm like, How quickly can I get myself and my guests to a place of safety, wherever that is, you know? Like, we've been lucky so far, but don't push it. . . . It didn't cross my mind for a minute that she would just set herself down—with no plan for an exit, no direction home, you know?—on the *bleep*ing, excuse me, beach. Excuse me? Oh, the pilot said he saw . . . ? No, Larry, I can't say who that would be. The staff are all accounted for, I believe, and my guests and myself, ditto. If there was somebody hanging around there, poor bastard, it's news to me. Maybe a looter, I don't want to be pejorative here, it would be the same way in California, no question, but uncertain times kind of bring forth thieves. I guess he paid a high price, huh.

The seismic moment of an earthquake is measured by using the logarithm of moment—known as the magnitude—rather than the moment itself. Thus all earthquakes, small to large, are typically ranked from one to nine, each unit of magnitude representing a tenfold increase in strength. A quake of the ninth magnitude is a billion times more powerful than a first-magnitude shock. This system of measurement is named after the American seismologist Charles Richter. The monster quake that hits the Pacific coast of Mexico in the early evening of February 14th, obliterating the Villa Huracán, the nearby hamlet of Aparajitos, the towns of Puerto Vallarta to the south and Mazatlán to the north, and much else besides, measures a full nine on the Richter scale, which is to say: as bad as it gets. Seismologists report the creation of a gigantic new fault approximately a thousand kilometres long and a hundred kilometres wide, and running more or less exactly along the coastline. It is a major event in the geological history of the earth. A rift along the eternal frontier between the dry land and the sea.

Another possibility, of course, is that it is the beginning of an unimaginable end.

SHE is alone when it happens. Perhaps she stands on the breakfast terrace beneath a giant fresno ash, drinking a Margarita made with *tres generaciones* tequila, thinking about an old novelist's exposed genitalia, or about Ormus Cama and his eye patch, his headaches, his prophecies. Or about the future; about me. Imagining her, I have again shrouded her in photographic silence. If the birds shriek, if the wind suddenly howls in the trees, if, as on Prospero's isle, the jungle behind El Huracán is filled with noises, I know nothing of these. A tempest is coming, but I am not interested in spells or usurpations.

Or she is not alone. Some Caliban emerges from the jungle to reclaim his birthright. She is menaced. Or she is not menaced. She struggles. No, there is no struggle. There is no Other. The pilot lied to seem more responsible than he was, to save face; that's all. The Other is a phantom, a figment. She is alone, with a Margarita in her hand. There is a beautiful sunset. In her last minutes she is bathed in the beauty of the world. Perhaps she sings. I want to think of her singing against the orange-and-purple sky.

Though I hear nothing else, yet can

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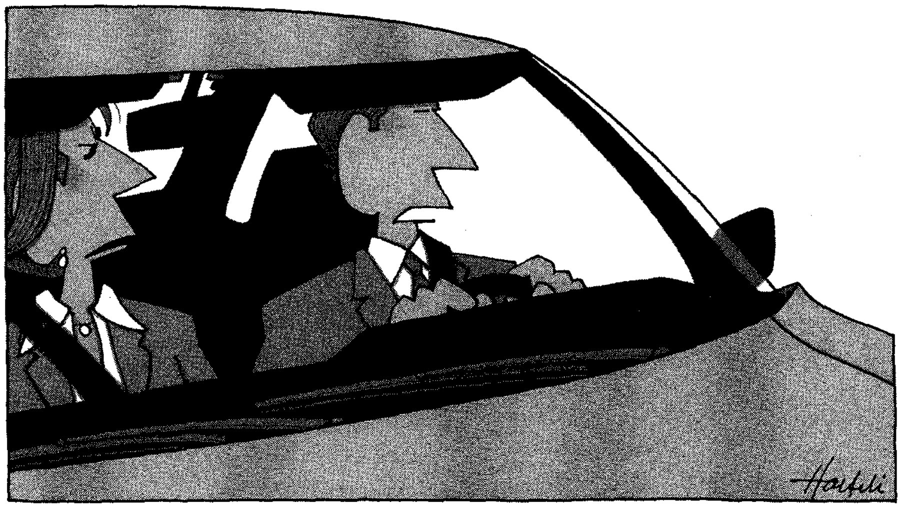


"It would behoove you to remember that our passenger-side airbag has been disconnected."

• •

I hear her heroic voice raised in song.

Then the ground simply opens and eats her, like a mouth.

A great sweep of Pacific coastline is similarly, simultaneously, devoured. The slip of the earthquake is eleven metres: huge. The ocean boils in and fills the gash in the earth, the tear in reality. Water, earth, fire belch high into the sky. The deaths, the *disappearances*, are measured in the tens, the hundreds of thousands.

The earth closes over her body, bites, chews, swallows, and she's gone.

The scale of emergency dwarfs individual tragedies. So many dead, so much damage both structural and infrastructural, such a hammer blow to the country's soul, and more: to the human race's sense of ease upon the earth. Roads, bridges, airstrips, whole mountains lie in ruins, or beneath the encroaching sea. A gargantuan relief operation is under way, and access to the devastated area, for all but military and relief-agency personnel, is denied. A few television news crews and still photographers are given accreditation and taken in and around by Army helicopters. International aid requires pictures. We can be of use.

So I am deep in the heart of ruination when the Vina photograph goes boffo on the planet's front pages; when she becomes the face of the catastrophe. I am looking at scenes out of Bosch—the decapitated heads of children hanging from the branches of broken trees, women's naked legs sticking vertically upward, like twin swords, out of "solid" rock—scenes that trouble even a war photographer's stomach. I have no awareness of having helped to create a myth. Even when the colonel in charge of press operations goes out of his way to arrange an overflight of the site of the vanished Villa Huracán, I understand nothing. He is pandering to the Western world's cult of celebrity, I think. He's probably right: it's good for a few extra column inches, which, translated into dollars, makes this part of the itinerary a real money-spinner. As pictures go, this one's no different from the others: the torn land, the intruding ocean, the uprooted trees. Standard disaster imagery, not a palapa or swimming pool or dead starlet to be seen. I am thinking these hard-bitten thoughts when unexpectedly I fall apart. I weep in my bucket seat until the thick marrow-snot comes down my nose. I weep like a howling dog on the grave of his fallen mistress. In the end one of the TV-crew sound engineers asks me to shut the fuck up, I'm louder than the rotor blades, my misery is wrecking the goddam shot.

These fallen boulders are her tombstone, this brokenness her grave. I shout her name aloud. Vina, Vina!

When we land, back at the Guadalajara Army strip, the colonel, a man my own age, comes up to me. You knew her, I think? —Yes, I say. —Then is it your picture? He takes out his wallet and there, folded up, is teetering Vina in the tequila-flooded street. I stare at the badly reproduced image on the worn and smudgy newsprint while the wind tries to tear it from my hands. Señor, it is a sad time for you, the colonel says, and for sure I have much respect for your personal grief, but, please, you can give me on this picture your amiable autograph?

Dazed, I sign my name.

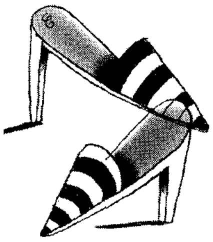
THAT she was loved, of course, I always knew. The facts about her public persona were not in doubt: that people in countries she had never visited cherished her for the beauty of her voice; that millions of males desired her body and dreamed of it at night; that women of all ages admired and were grateful for her outspokenness, her fearlessness, her musicianship; that when she campaigned against famine, or for the alleviation of the Third World's burden of debt, or on behalf of various environmental and vegetarian agencies, the world's leaders, expecting to patronize her, to pat her on the backside and ignore her demands, were first impressed, then seduced, and finally coerced into significant concessions by her quickness of intellect, her determination, her "rasp"; that she was intensely famous, fabulously photogenic, overwhelmingly sexy, and great good fun; and that she was the first superstar of the age of confession, who, by her willingness to bare her scars, to live her private life in public, to talk about her wounds, her mistakes, her faults, found a direct line to the world's ashamed uncontent heart, so that, extraordinary and unusual and powerful and successful as she was, she came to be seen as an ordinary woman writ large, flawed yet worthy, strong and weak, self-reliant and needy. She was a rock goddess of the golden age, but she was, improbably, also one of us.

To know all this was nevertheless to be entirely unprepared for the scale of the worldwide response to her death. She was, after all, "only a singer," and not even a Callas or a Sutherland but merely a "low-culture" popular entertainer whose rock group, VTO, had been disbanded for almost two years. Given her fame, it was predictable that press, radio, and television coverage of her demise would be heavy; that there would be small gatherings of grieving fans; that tears, many of them crocodile, would be freely or opportunistically shed; that there would be a number of determinedly jaundiced, professionally against-the-flow voices seeking to tarnish and diminish her memory; even that scandals hitherto concealed might come to light. But any more extreme reaction would be entirely without precedent. Retrospectives, tribute albums, charitable donations, a surge in back-catalogue record sales, a memorial concert or two, and then on to the next business: these were the characteristic stages, the ordained rites of such a passage.

Dead Vina, however, had a surprise up her sleeve for us all.

This posthumous goddess, this underground post-Vina, queen of the Underworld, supplanting dread Persephone on her throne, grew into something simply overwhelming. Alive, and at her peak, she had been a beloved figure, even an icon, an electrifying performer and a charismatic loudmouth, but that was about the size of it, let's not get carried away. Dying when the world shook, by her death she shook the world, and was quickly raised, like a fallen Caesar, to the ranks of the divine.

ALL over the world, when the news of her death breaks, people pour into the streets, whatever their local hour, pushed out of their homes by a force they can't yet name. It's not the news of the earthquake that galvanizes them, not the myriad Mexican dead they're mourning, it's just her. It's hard to mourn for strangers except conventionally, routinely; the true mourners of the hundred thousand casualties are themselves among the dead. But Vina is not a stranger. The crowds know her, and over and over again, in the streets of Yokohama, Darwin, Montevideo, Calcutta, Stockholm, Newcastle, Los Angeles, people are heard describing her death as a personal bereavement, a death in the family. By her dying she has momentarily reinvented their sense of a larger kinship, of their membership in the family of mankind.



The standard model of the universe tells us that after the big bang matter was not evenly distributed through the new cosmos. There was clumping, and from these aggregates of matter were born the galaxies and stars. Likewise, as the human race explodes out of doors, it clumps. The favored centers of congregation are not the high places of the world; not the palaces, parliaments, houses of worship, or great squares. At first people seek out the low milieux of music, the dance halls, the record stores, the clubs. But these addresses prove unsuitable: not enough room. The crowds begin, instead, to gravitate to stadiums, arenas, parks, maidans—the major venues. Shea Stadium, Candlestick Park, Soldier Field, San Siro, Bernabeu, Wembley, Munich's Olympic Stadium, Rio's fabulous Maracanã. Even the old Altamont Speedway is thronged. In Bombay, where she never performed professionally—there was just that one moment onstage with the Five Pennies more than a quarter of a century ago—the Wankhede is full. In Tokyo, Sydney, Johannesburg, Beijing, Teheran, they gather in great numbers and simply wait.

After a slow, even hostile start, the world's authorities are forced into grudging compliance. Days of public mourning are announced, services of remembrance are proposed. The gathered crowds have no interest in this belated reaction of the high and mighty. From their governments they demand only food, water, and toilet facilities, and these begin to be provided.

In the packed stadiums, the sound systems offer her music to the crowds. This gift is accepted. Where possible, videotapes of her performances are played on stadium screens. In many countries, national sporting programs are suspended, cinemas and theatres are closed, restaurants stand empty. In all the world, or so it seems, there is only this single, uniting event: the miracle of the stadiums, the people gathered to share their loss. If her death was the death of all the world's joy, this life after death is like that joy reborn and multiplied.

In many stadiums the crowds call for stages to be constructed, and they duly are. Individual men and women walk up onto these stages and begin to declaim. They talk simply, personally but selflessly, about where they were when they first heard her music and what it has meant in their lives, at their weddings, their children's births, the death of their lovers; in solitude and fellowship, on special days and everydays, in their dotage and in their youth.

As if for the first time, the importance of this music—her music, and the music of which she has been part—is made manifest as people, motivated by her living-dead memory, find their voices and speak awkward or eloquent words of love. Music—Vina's voice, singing Ormus's melodies—surges round the world, crossing all frontiers, belonging everywhere and nowhere, and its rhythm is the rhythm of life. ♦

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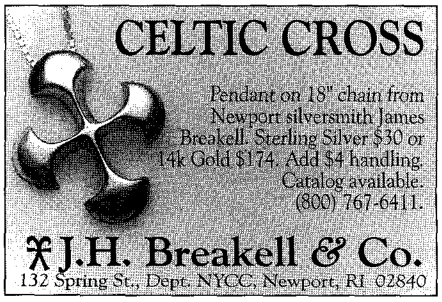
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ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

THE MAN WHO WALKS ON AIR

Philippe Petit is about to perform the greatest show of his life. Is it art?

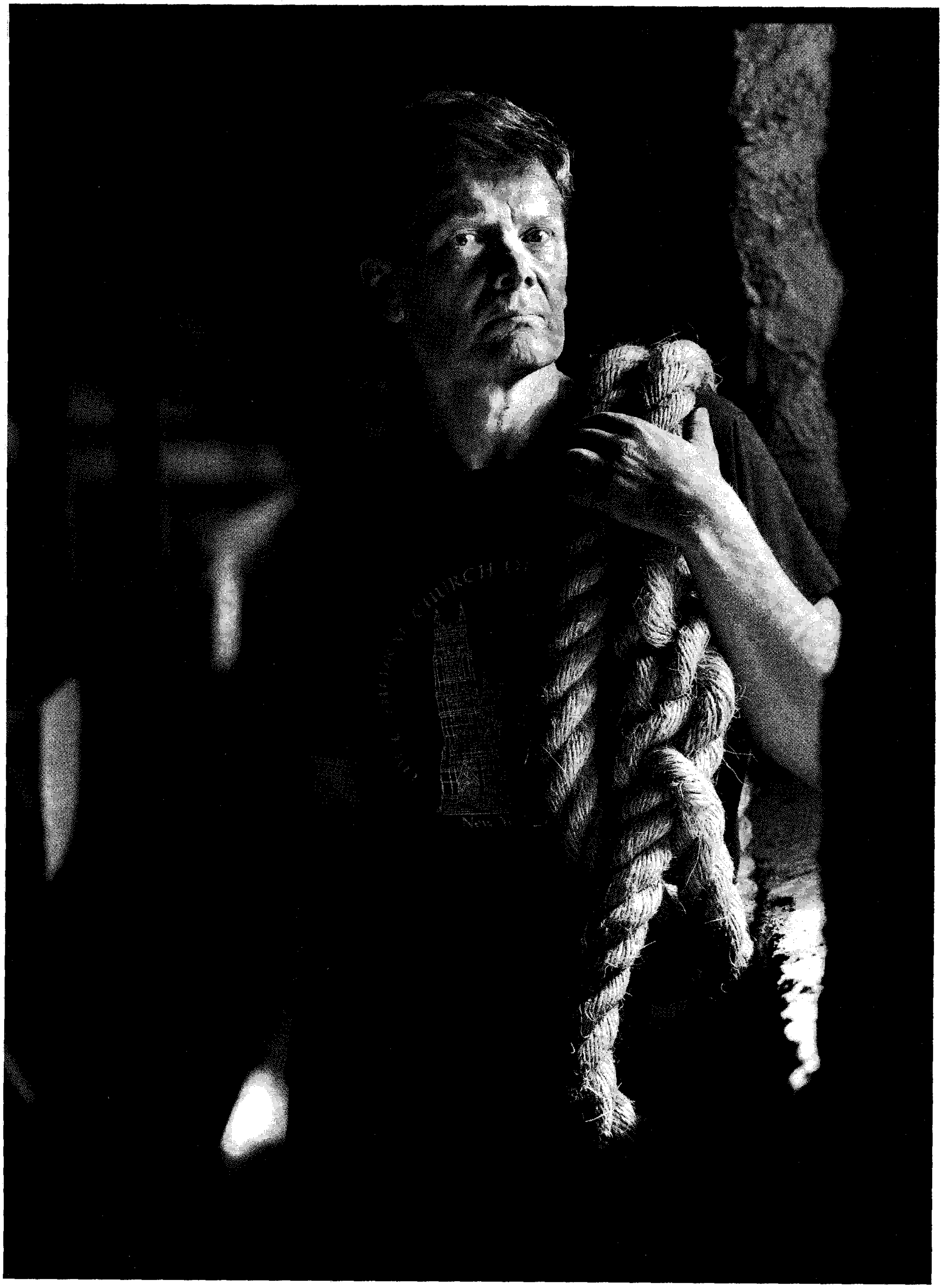
BY CALVIN TOMKINS

FROM the departure point, the void hits you like a thunderclap. It is sixteen hundred feet down, straight down, to the meandering bed of the Little Colorado River. The distance across, to the isolated mesa on the other side, which Philippe Petit will walk to on his cable, is twelve hundred feet. Several million years of geological time are on view in that perpendicular rockface, with its tan, purple, and reddish-ochre layers. Petit has photographed and mapped every inch of it. He has given names to certain areas, to help him identify the forty-six anchor points for the twenty-three cavalletti, or guy lines, that are needed to stabilize the cable. "You see that circle there?" he says, pointing to a patch of lighter tan near the top. "I call it the Clock. If you imagine a clock's hands there, I will arrive at noon."

Philippe Petit, the only living high-wire artist who performs in the world at large, outside the circus, has been planning his Canyon Walk for years. He put a cable across in 1988, but then Jacques Chirac, the mayor of Paris, gave him permission to do his Eiffel Tower walk for the Bicentennial of the French Revolution, and that and other projects intervened. The old cable, recently severed, hangs down the cliff face from the departure point; it will be removed before Petit and his crew of riggers install the new one. Standing too close to the edge, jauntily pointing out other spots he has named on the sheer rockface—"giant's foot," "shopping list," "living room," "stovepipe"—Petit is the focal point in this harsh, tremendous landscape. He is five feet seven inches tall, slim but sturdy, with red-brown hair and large, powerful-looking hands. He talks fast, in French-accented but confident English. He is forty-nine years old. It is twenty-five years since he secretly stretched a cable between the twin towers of the World Trade Center and electrified New York by performing on it for nearly an hour. He has made seventy high-wire walks, all over the world. Most of them have been legal, unlike the World Trade Center caper, and each one, in his mind and in the eyes of thousands of spectators, has been a work of art—not a daredevil stunt but a complex and intricately choreographed theatrical performance.

After the World Trade Center crossing, in 1974, American admirers kept telling Petit that he should "do" the Grand Canyon, so eventually he went to see it. "I found it almost ugly or boring," he recalls. "Two rims twelve miles apart—for four hours I would be a little dot in the sky, and break a record for distance. I'm sorry, that doesn't interest me." Looking at the map, though, he noticed that about fifteen miles east of Grand Canyon National Park, where the tourists congregate, a tributary of the Colorado River narrowed and ran through a vast tract called the Navajo Tribal Lands. Petit and Kathy O'Donnell, who is his companion and since 1987 has been the producer of his high-wire spectacles, spent two weeks driving around this area with a Navajo guide. "I didn't know what I was looking for except that it should be something that will stop my heart in the landscape," Petit told me. "We saw many magnificent canyons, but essentially boring canyons, until the very last day, when we rented a small plane. We had no more money, we could not have bought one more hour of air time, but then, from the airplane, I saw a site that had profundity, that had mystery, that was stopping my heart. In a bend of the Little Colorado River gorge I saw a rim that was like a *presqu' île*—an almost island—and across from it a solitary mesa, a tower of gigantic proportions. Here was a site, I realized, where I could walk from the known to the unknown, from civilization to a place where man had never set foot. I made a quick sketch from the air, and the next day I came back and explored that place on foot, and then it became the only place."

Canyon Walk, Petit says, will be his masterpiece. In a written statement whose cadences simultaneously echo and mock the circus hyperbole that he detests, he calls it "the greatest show of my life, the most arduous crossing, the most fragile, the most astonishing, the most icy, the most shared, the most intimate, the most radiant, the most imposing, the most celestial. Like all the others, past and future." It is scheduled to take place this summer, on July 17th (depending on the weather), sometime between one and four o'clock in the afternoon, and it will be telecast, live, for a global audience that is expected to be in the millions. Although his Eiffel Tower walk, in 1989, was much longer than this one—more than two thousand feet, on an inclined cable stretching from ground level, at the Place du Trocadéro, to a point near the tower's second-stage landing—Canyon Walk is the highest: the cable here will be three hundred feet higher than the one at the World Trade Center. The combination of length and height and the exposed nature of the site, which offers no protection from the wind, makes this the



Petit at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, where he is an artist-in-residence. Photograph by Chris Callis.

most demanding and, of course, the most dangerous of his walks, but danger is not an element that figures in Petit's calculations. As he often says, he takes no risks. What he means is that he prepares so thoroughly for each walk—learning everything there is to learn about the site (weather, wind patterns, history, geological or architectural features, etc.), rigging his cable and cavalletti according to ultra-conservative safety factors, and trusting his own phenomenal powers of concentration to rule out any misstep—that the danger, although real and present, is subject to his control.

"I prepare by reducing the unknown to nothing," he tells me, up there on that cliff, "but also by knowing my limits. If I think I am a hero who is invincible, I will pay for it with my life. Anyone you bring here will be slapped in the face by the immensity of the site. How arrogant of me to dare to put a wire across and say I will walk! I have to be very respectful of the space. The space is something I will never conquer or master. But if I walk it with artistry, with poetry, with meaning, as a piece of theatre, or an opera, which is what I call this walk, then maybe it can inspire you. I would never have attempted this walk thirty years ago. It has taken me a lifetime of serious confrontation."

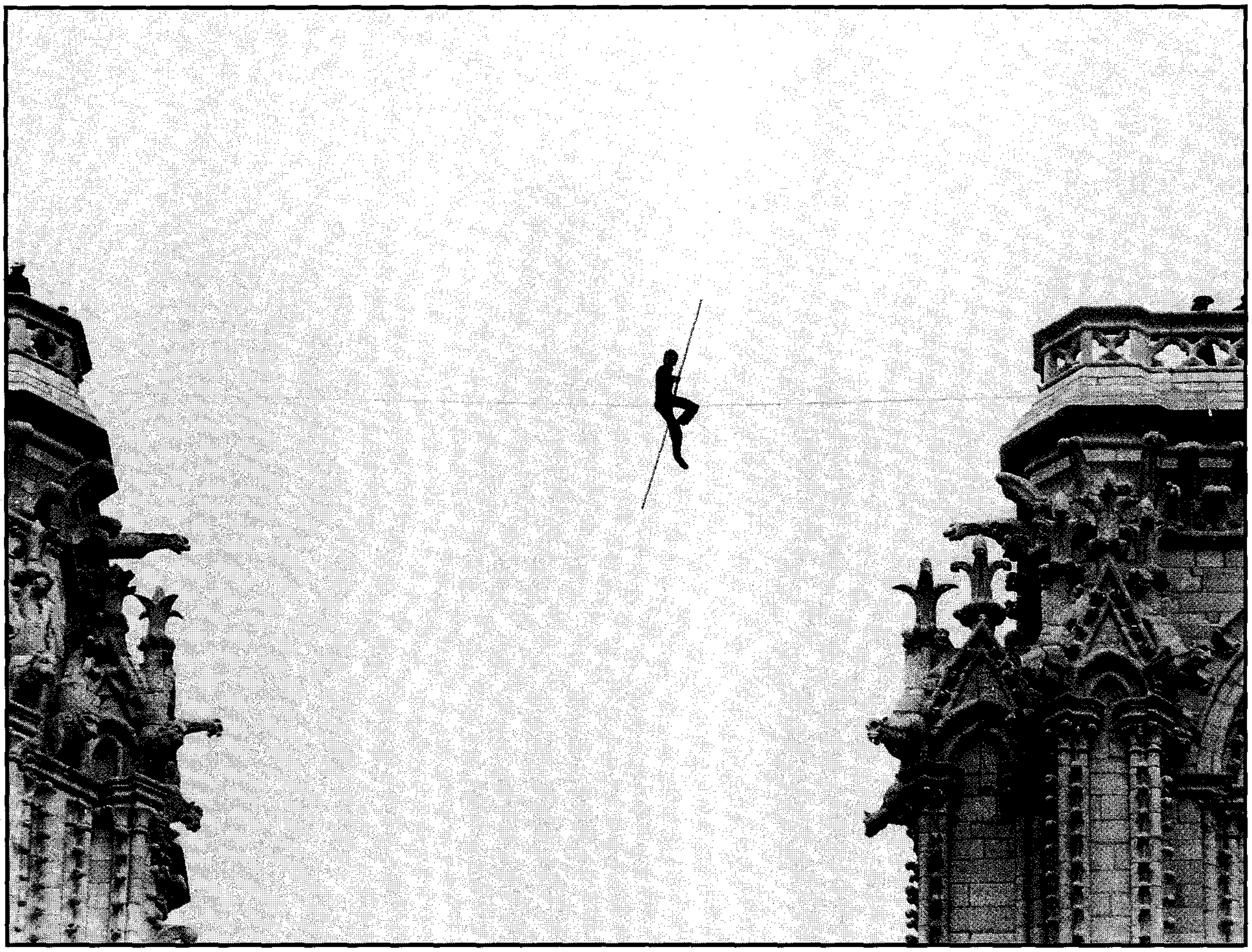
THE history of walking on ropes has not yet been written. Petit plans to do that when he finds time. He has been gathering material for it since he began wire walking, at the age of sixteen, and in "Funambule," one of four books he has written and published, he devotes a section to historical notes on the practice. Ropewalking, he tells us, had its origins in ancient Greece. It spread to Rome in the time of Marcus Aurelius and became hugely popular during the Middle Ages, when acrobats danced and performed high above the heads of spectators at major public events, or ascended and descended inclined ropes attached to the bell towers of cathedrals and other high places. The immense popularity of these spectacles eventually led to their being shut down by the clergy, and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the art of ropedancing, as it had come to be called, was confined to small theatres in Paris and a few other cities. Open-air "ascensions" reëmerged after the Revolution, and master funambulists—from the Latin *funis* ("rope") and *ambulare* ("to walk")—became the toast of Paris. Pierre Forioso (the "incomparable") walked on a rope from the Pont de la Concorde to the Pont des Tuileries to celebrate Napoleon's birthday in 1807. Mme. Saqui, née Marguerite-Antoinette Lalanne, so captivated the susceptible Bonaparte with her ascensions and her dramatic evocations, at great heights, of the Battle of Wagram and the crossing of the Great St. Bernard pass that he named her Première Acrobate de Sa Majesté l'Empereur et Roi and sent her off to perform for his troops.

The most famous *funambule* of the last century, however, was Jean-François Gravelet, known as Blondin, "whose dangerous and difficult leaps," Petit writes, "were executed with a precision and assurance that exceeded anything done before him." Having conquered his native France and the rest of Europe, Blondin laid claim to America by walking over Niagara Falls, in 1859. Not the falls itself, as Petit points out: he put his manila rope across a narrow gorge some distance below the falls and enthralled thousands of spectators with his daring maneuvers; on one crossing he cooked and ate an omelette. Petit, playing the role of Blondin, re-created his Niagara crossing for a 1986 IMAX film called "Niagara: Miracles, Myths & Magic." The film, he says, was "historically ridiculous." His unfulfilled ambition is to make films—films conceived, written, directed, produced, starred in, and maybe even distributed by him. There is a certain arrogance in this, but then, as Petit says in more ebullient and playful moments, he has earned the right to be arrogant.

GROWING up in the suburbs of Paris, an absurdly rebellious middle child (older sister, younger brother) in a bourgeois family, Petit taught himself to walk on a rope by stretching several ropes between two trees in a meadow on the family's country estate and then taking them away one at a time. Other passions competed in those years—magic, juggling, classical equitation, fencing, theatre, drawing, bullfighting. All played havoc with his education (he was kicked out of five schools) and tried the patience of his father, Edmond Petit, a French Army pilot and an author. (His "World History of Aviation" is currently in its ninth printing.) The wire won out, but when Rudolf Omankowsky, the leader of a famous troupe of touring wire walkers called Les Diables Blancs, offered to train Petit as a circus performer Petit declined. He paid Papa Rudy to show him the techniques of rigging and securing wire cables, and learned the rest on his own. Petit swears that he has no special athletic abilities or sense of balance. "It is not difficult to walk on a tightrope," he assured me. "But you need to have passion, and you have to work madly, to practice all day long. Within one year, I taught myself to do all the things you could do on a wire. I learned the backward somersault, the front somersault, the unicycle, the bicycle, the chair on the wire, jumping through hoops. But I thought, What is the big deal here? It looks almost ugly. So I started to discard those tricks and to reinvent my art."

Because no circus would hire Petit, who demanded to be allowed to perform in his own style, he became a street juggler. He developed a character (nonverbal, black-clad, intensely concentrated) and a brief performance that included some magic, some juggling, and much subtle and humorous interaction with the spectators; it usually ended with a few minutes on a length of rope strung between improvised supports. He would perform three or four times a day, creating his own stage by drawing a circle in white chalk on some chosen spot (for years he worked outside the Café les Deux Magots, in Saint-Germain des Prés), and, in spite of more than five hundred arrests (by his own count), he never went hungry.

He lived in a tiny room on the Rue Laplace. From that Left Bank neighborhood he could just see the towers of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame. "One day," he recalls, "I decide that I am going to put a wire there, and surprise Paris, surprise the world." It took him three years and countless visits in the guise of a tourist to prepare this first, clandestine "coup," which took place on June 26, 1971. The day before, using subterfuges and techniques that he later adapted for the World Trade Center walk, Petit and two volunteer assistants smuggled in several hundred pounds of cable and other equipment, hid until dark, and passed the cable across from one tower to the other by throwing a rubber ball with a fishing line attached to it. At ten o'clock the next morning, Petit emerged from his hiding place,



On June 26, 1971, Petit surprised Paris, and the world, as he crossed and recrossed between the towers of Notre-Dame.

picked up his long balancing pole, and stepped out onto the wire. He crossed and recrossed between the towers, knelt on the wire, lay down on it, put aside his pole and juggled three Indian clubs, and held the city of Paris in a delirium of suspense and delight. It was the beginning of his real life as a high-wire walker and the end, in a sense, of his life as a Frenchman. Deeply wounded by what he felt to be the short-lived enthusiasm of his countrymen—he was arrested, released, lionized for a day or so, and then quickly forgotten by the French news media—he packed up and took his street-juggling act to the South of France and then to other countries: to Russia; to Australia, where he pulled off another clandestine walk, on a cable between the pylons of the Sydney Harbour Bridge; and eventually to New York, where, without money and knowing no one, he achieved the almost unimaginable feat of investing the World Trade Center, those two slabs of architectural ennui, with a thrilling and terrible beauty.

The offers poured in after that, of course—from Arrow Shirts and Burger King and a dozen other commercial franchises. He rejected them all. Instead, with certain misgivings, he joined the circus. Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus made him a featured performer, and he toured the United States in that capacity for nearly a year—an experience he describes as "a dream and a nightmare combined." He disliked doing the same twelve-minute routine two or sometimes three times a day, so he improvised freely. Performing without a net, he did all the circus tricks that were expected—the forward and backward somersaults and the unicycle and the stick-and-ball balanced on his forehead—but he refused to play to the audience in the "vulgar" way that a circus walker does, by making the tricks look more difficult than they are, or pretending to lose his balance so the crowd will scream. Petit fell once, from a forty-five-foot-high wire, during that year with Ringling Brothers. It was the only serious fall he has ever had—he broke several ribs, and sustained internal injuries as well—but because it happened while he was practicing, rather than performing, he insists that it doesn't count. He made a rapid recovery, and finished out his contract with Ringling Brothers. He has been on his own ever since.

"Some wire walkers in the circus are technically much better than I am," Petit told me. "They perform every day, and they do things I never do—human pyramids, somersaults from a bicycle. But I am a better wire walker because I have something they will never have. There is nothing more beautiful or essential in the world of wire walking than simply walking on the wire, but in circus school no high-wire walker is learning that. They don't walk beautifully, or elegantly, because they don't love it enough. They are not inhabited by the wire."

ST. JOHN THE DIVINE is the largest Gothic cathedral in the world. The church, its ancillary structures, and its garden occupy three blocks from Amsterdam Avenue to Morningside Drive, between 110th and 113th Streets. Philippe Petit has been an artist-in-residence there since 1980. He fell in love with the place when James Parks Morton, the cathedral's charismatic and somewhat unorthodox dean, invited the fledgling Big Apple Circus, with which Petit had appeared once or twice as a guest artist, to use the Synod House as its circus school for a few weeks. Petit told Morton he would like to do a high-wire walk inside the cathedral. Morton, who knew about the association of cathedrals and tightrope walking in the Middle Ages, was all for it, but his trustees said no. (What if he fell?) Petit put up a cable anyway and did his walk. When he came down, the police arrested him for trespassing. They were taking him away in handcuffs when Dean Morton, who hadn't witnessed the walk, appeared and told them to release the culprit. "He wasn't trespassing," Morton told the cops. "He is an artist of this cathedral." Afterward, it seemed like such a good idea that Morton and Petit made it official.

Petit has his "office" high up in the triforium, a narrow balcony over the nave. He has built shelves, cabinets, and workspaces there; everything is organized cleverly and meticulously, as on a ship. He and I stood on his balcony at five o'clock one Sunday afternoon, listening to a choir rehearsing for Vespers far below us. "I am not a man of belief, but I really belong in this cathedral," Petit said quietly. "When you think about it, wire walking is very close to what religion is. 'Religion' is from the Latin *religare*, which means to link something, people or places. And to know, before you take your first step on a wire, that you are going to do the last one—this is a kind of faith." Dean Morton had told me that Petit is one of the most religious people he knows. "Sometimes very unusual people turn out to be the most religious," the Dean said. "I think of this as God's joke."

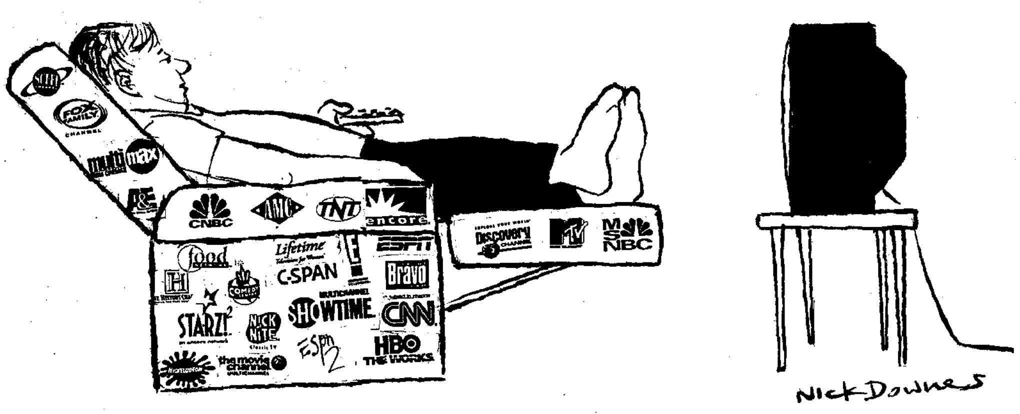
Since his unauthorized 1980 walk, Petit has done six authorized walks in St. John the Divine, the last one in honor of Dean Morton's retirement, in 1996. He has a practice cable installed in the Synod House, and one evening last winter I went there with a small group of his friends to see him walk. "This is not a show," he explained to us at the outset. "Just cooking." He stripped down to a black T-shirt and black knee-length tights, which gave him a sort of rough-and-ready, working-class look, and put a tape of classical guitar music on his portable tape player. Before getting on the wire, he did some juggling to warm up. Petit, who readily admits that he is not a great juggler, seemed rusty at first. Every time he got six rings in the air at once, one or two of them would clatter to the floor. Two teen-age girls in our group started to giggle. Petit's movements were quick, fluid, and a little impatient. After ten minutes of this, he got on the wire, which was stretched fifty feet between the balconies on either side of the room and guyed by two cavalletti anchored to the hardwood floor, about eighteen feet below.

He looked entirely different to me up there—lighter, taller, aristocratic. He walked barefoot, in a smooth, steady rhythm, his head held high. His eighteen-foot-long balancing pole nearly brushed the chandeliers when he made his turn and started back. After several crossings, he stepped off the wire, put on a pair of ballet slippers, and changed the tape from guitar music to jazz. Back on the wire, he moved in a different style, which I recognized, from his writings, as his *marche de torero*.

There are an infinite number of walks on the wire, Petit tells us in "On the High Wire," the only one of his books available in English. (The translation is by the novelist Paul Auster, who is a friend of his.) "There is the walk that glides, like that of a bullfighter who slowly approaches his adversary, the presence of danger growing with each new step, his body arched outrageously, hypnotized." Petit, who spent a year of his youth as an apprentice torero in France and Spain, slid one foot along the wire and then the other, his body projecting a sinuous arrogance. By this time, I had lost any sense that he could fall. He knelt down on the wire, and then reclined on his back, stretching his legs until one lay along the wire and the other hung down; he rested the balancing pole on his stomach, and let his arms hang free.

After another sequence of linked crossings, he put the balancing pole down on one balcony and crossed back and forth without it, using his arms for balance. He walked quickly, in a sort of running dance step. He picked up three Indian clubs and juggled them, expertly this time—no misses. Leaving the wire again, he signalled to Evelyne Crochet, a concert pianist who has worked with him on a number of his performances. She left our group and walked across to a piano at the far end of the room. As she began a meditative rendering of "The Well-Tempered Clavier," Petit slung his balancing pole over one shoulder and demonstrated another of his favorite walks, a casual and relaxed stroll, eyes turned upward, free arm swinging at his side. It is what he calls "the solid walk of a man of the earth returning home, a tool over his shoulder, satisfied with the day's work."

Afterward, over dinner at a nearby Indian restaurant, Petit told me that he likes to work without a balancing pole. He has done many short walks that way, including several on an inclined wire. (Inclined wires are no more difficult to walk on than straight ones, he says. He has even walked on them blindfolded. In circus parlance, the blindfolded walk on an inclined wire is a "death walk," and it is always referred to as an "attempt.") "I want one day to do a big walk without a balancing pole," Petit said. "It has never been done, in the history of acrobatics. And, since I am a man



of the theatre, I have invented a dramatic way of introducing that. I turn the pole until it is almost vertical and then throw it out, so that it does not bang on the wire. I would love to present the image of a human being leaving the crowd and becoming part of the sky, with no balancing pole."

In the living room of a small, cozy farmhouse near Woodstock, in upstate New York, Petit shows me "The Book" for Canyon Walk, a bulging album filled with eleven years of accumulated data: handwritten notes; drawings and photographs; engineering specifications; geological surveys; maps; weather records from Grand Canyon Village going back fifteen years; information on Navajo customs, dress, music, art, history, and mythology; and technical information on cables, state-of-the-art polypropylene ropes (for the cavalletti), clamps, shackles, rock drills, bits, pulleys, anchors, block and tackles, counterweights. In an office in his basement are file cabinets and plastic cartons filled with more data, all splendidly organized. This represents the enormous effort of reducing the unknown to nothing, and Petit does it himself, without a secretary or a computer.

Kathy O'Donnell handles the computer work, the telephone, the fax machine. As Petit's producer and working partner, she makes it possible for him to do what he does. "I'm the bitch in the organization," she tells me, laughing easily. "I'm much tougher than he is, and I don't suffer fools gladly. It was always easy for me to talk to people about Philippe, because I got what he was trying to do. When you have a man who won't do commercials, and who is as uncompromising about his work and his life as Philippe is, it is pretty clear that he is not going to give us cheap thrills. But a lot of people just don't get it." O'Donnell grew up in Manhattan. Her father was the executive vice-president of Doubleday, and she worked in the book business herself until 1987, when, having met Petit and helped out on a couple of his walks, she quit her job to help produce Walking the Harp/A Bridge for Peace, a high-wire performance on a cable linking the Jewish and the Arab quarters of Jerusalem. She has been the producer of all his projects since then, and he depends on her for many things. She helped him survive the death of Gypsy, a daughter he had with his previous companion, Elaine Fasula. A lovely and spirited child, Gypsy died of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1992, when she was nine and a half years old. Her ashes were placed in the columbarium at St. John the Divine.

Across the driveway from the house, Petit is building an eighteenth-century barn. He has worked on it since 1993, off and on, using only the methods and the tools that were available to builders then: no nails, no power saws. "I actually dislike pretty much the world in which we live," he told me. "If I could choose, I would probably live in the Renaissance or the Middle Ages." Since the World Trade Center walk, he has lived mostly in this country. "I love many things in France—the wine, the cheese, the bread, the art, the architecture, the history—but there is a lot I dislike in the French system," he confided. "Do I like America? Not really. I have nothing to do with money, with power, with success. I didn't choose this country, I chose the twin towers, and I stay here one week, one month, one year, and now it's twenty-five years. But I live in my own world. I could be anywhere."

Petit's intransigent nature and his drive to control every aspect and detail of his strange calling make Kathy O'Donnell's job difficult at times. But Petit can be gregarious, funny, charming, and mesmerizingly persuasive. "Philippe has never been bored in his life," according to O'Donnell, "and there has never been a moment when he didn't know what he wanted to do." In spite of having no interest in money or success, he loves good food and good wine, and he is on friendly terms with the owners of some superlative restaurants, including Taillevent, in Paris, and Chanterelle, in New York. Petit designed a menu for Chanterelle some years back, a talent for drawing being another in his seemingly endless repertoire of skills. A number of artists in other fields are in awe of him. Mikhail Baryshnikov, who engineered the crucial meeting between Petit and Jacques Chirac which led to the permission for Petit's Eiffel Tower walk, vividly remembers a night in a Copenhagen restaurant when Petit invited a young woman who was dining alone to join their table and then managed to get her watch off her wrist and on his own without her noticing it. "What's impres-

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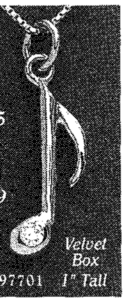

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sive about Philippe is the purpose, the idea, the complexity of his work," Baryshnikov said recently. "There is always a certain quest, which is noble."

Canyon Walk will cost three and a half million dollars to produce. O'Donnell had hoped that a large part of this would come from the sale of television rights, but none of the networks would commit themselves to a live telecast (Petit insists that the walk be shown live) because of the perennial "what-if factor"—not what if he falls but what if somebody's four-year-old sees him fall and the parents sue the network for traumatizing their child. At the moment, O'Donnell is working out a deal with a pay-per-view provider, to do a live ninety-minute telecast of the walk, with interlinear footage on Petit and his career, and on the Navajos. Meanwhile, a young German management consultant named Thomas Ring volunteered to raise the front money for the walk. Ring had heard Petit lecture at a symposium on creativity and motivation, in Zermatt; hugely impressed, he arranged to meet him and asked what he could do to help. O'Donnell, who had been skeptical at first, was eventually won over by Ring's dedication and enterprise, and he ended up raising the necessary funds. Petit and O'Donnell are cautiously hopeful that the global telecast of Canyon Walk will be a watershed event in his career, one that will make future projects easier to produce. "It may change my life, don't you think?" he asked me, half kidding. "If not, I am going to kill myself."

ON May 3rd, Petit and O'Donnell move out to Flagstaff, Arizona, to prepare for Canyon Walk. The new cable will be stretched across in June, and Petit and his team of riggers, who are also experienced rock climbers, will spend eight weeks anchoring and installing the twenty-three cavalletti. Petit usually depends on this hard and highly specialized work to get him in shape for a performance, but during the countdown to Canyon Walk he will also work out in a gym adjacent to their motel, and, not far from the walk site, set up a practice cable about twelve feet off the ground and three hundred and fifty feet longer than the real one. "It has the same orientation, so I will receive the same winds," he told me. "And I will practice sometimes under the worst conditions: at dusk, when I can hardly see, with a balancing pole that is too heavy, without cavalletti. I will do it with friends banging on the cable. I will do it in the strongest wind, to the point where maybe I will have to grab the wire. I will do it in the rain, and with the sun in my eyes, and when I am too tired to do it. That will put me in a very aggressive frame of mind, so that when I find myself on the real wire, on a beautiful calm, sunny day, it will seem like a nice promenade."

Cables for industrial use have grease worked into them during the manufacturing process (wire walkers must clean them carefully), but Diepa, the German firm that is making Petit's cable for Canyon Walk, agreed to do it without grease. This meant shutting down the machinery that weaves the wires into cables, scouring away all the accumulated grease, and forming the cable very slowly, to keep it from getting too hot. Petit's cable will be able to sustain a load of a hundred tons. To Petit, it is a live entity, like an animal. "To become a good wire walker, you should understand the wire, its construction, its tension, its vibration," he says. "It has many moods that you can accord yourself with—by controlling your breathing, by controlling the way you shift your weight. The cable has three movements. There is the vertical, up-and-down movement. There is also a swinging movement; even with cavalletti, the whole system is going to swing. And then there is a very treacherous movement, which is inside the cable—a kind of torque, with the cable moving on itself. These three movements do not occur in a predictable way but in a completely surprise way."

Since Canyon Walk will take place in the Navajo Tribal Lands, Petit and O'Donnell have spent a lot of time talking with various Navajo groups and organizations, and negotiating with them for the necessary permits. From the start, the Navajos have been impressed by Petit's respectful attitude and by his wanting to make them part of his "opera." Although Petit is reluctant to divulge the scenario of his performance in advance, he plans to begin it with a ceremony involving Navajos in tribal dress and traditional flute and drum music. He has also engaged a Spanish flamenco singer, who will be stationed on the riverbank at the bottom of the canyon. Petit wants him to perform the vocal exercise that flamenco singers use in preparing themselves for the extremes of flamenco sound, "a sort of howling," and then, a little later, he wants him to improvise a song about the walker while he is on the wire.

There are to be just a few hundred invited spectators, sitting on bleachers about fifty yards back from the canyon's edge, and they will not be able to hear or see the singer. Canyon Walk was conceived as a television performance; there will be at least fifteen cameras in use, and the best place to watch the performance, Petit tells everyone, is at home, on your TV screen. O'Donnell has arranged for tight security at the site, with a police checkpoint at the turnoff to the dirt road that Petit put in to provide access to his site, and a number of black-belt karate masters (friends of O'Donnell's, who have helped out on other productions) to discourage gate-crashers. Petit expects the walk itself to take about thirty-five minutes. He will pause at intervals on the wire to perform movements and gestures that he has prepared, along with others he may improvise, but there will be no return trip. The scenario calls for him to cross from the known to the unknown, and then, metaphorically speaking, to vanish into the territory of myth. (Off camera, a helicopter will pick him up and bring him back.) The only thing that could delay his journey at this point is the weather. Wind is the wire walker's nightmare. Just before Petit began a walk in Frankfurt, in 1994, the wind was blowing so hard that O'Donnell and others begged him to wait. He waited for twenty-five minutes and then went ahead anyway, unwilling to disappoint five hundred thousand spectators assembled in the square below, but there was a scary moment when a gust caught the long cloak that was part of his costume and almost lifted him off the wire. This time, if it's too windy, he has said he'll agree to postpone the walk until the following day.

"It is a terrifying walk, but you won't be terrified," he assured me. That may be true. Paul Auster, who has known Petit for twenty years, believes that the exhilaration we feel in watching him on the high wire comes from his taking us up there with him and conquering our fear in the process. "Obviously, it requires tremendous skill, and practice, and courage, but he makes it look so easy," Auster said. "He wants to inspire that sense of participation." Seeing him work out on the practice wire convinced me that Auster was right. And yet there is no denying that for both the artist and the spectator Petit's art is conditioned by the knowledge that he is risking his life.

"I have the patience of those who have fallen once," Petit wrote in "On the High Wire," "and whenever someone tells me of a high-wire walker who fell to the ground and was crushed, I answer: 'He got what he deserved.'" Petit knows that this will not happen to him. "I am not a death-wish person," he said to me. "I want to live very old. It is true that death is part of the frame—that it frames such activities as bullfighting and tightrope walking. My world is a dangerous world, sure, but I am very safe in knowing my limits. I am not playing with words when I say I don't take risks. The danger becomes so narrow that it is a novel companion with whom you travel. It is not an enemy." ♦

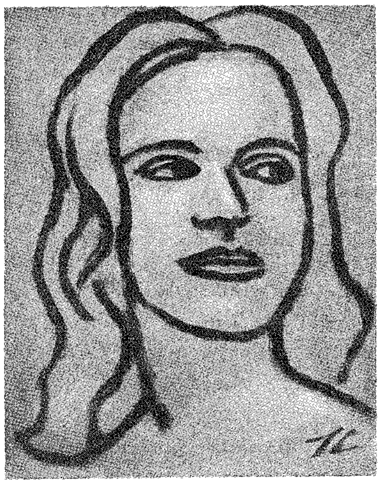
BOOKS

DOWN ON THE FARM

A young Londoner's comic misadventures in Sussex.

BY NAOMI BLIVEN

WITH her third novel, "The Country Life" (Picador; $24), the English writer Rachel Cusk makes her American début. (Her "Saving Agnes" won the 1993 Whitbread Prize for best first novel.) "The Country Life" is a brilliant oxymoron—a serious farce—so subtle that its command of the reader must be called insidious. You could think of it as a parody of "Jane Eyre," with a screwy governess instead of a mad wife, and with slapstick replacing melodrama, but that would make the book sound whimsical, and it isn't. Its effect is of immediate reality, primarily because the voice of its narrator, twenty-nine-year-old Stella Benson, is so seductive. Bright, candid, and modestly humorous, she lures us into complicity.



Rachel Cusk

When we meet Stella, she is emptying her London apartment and leaving an office job to move to Sussex. She has been hired, by mail, as a companion to Martin Madden, a disabled seventeen-year-old, who lives with his parents in a vast, elegantly furnished seventeenth-century house adjacent to the Maddens' Franchise Farm, a huge commercial enterprise. (Both house and farm are inherited.) Stella isn't given a room in the main house; alleging concern for her privacy, the Maddens put her up in a thatch-roofed cottage—a rustic slum that she finds enchantingly quaint. Other aspects of being a live-in domestic are less attractive, however, and Cusk's unemphatic portrayal of her heroine's attempts to adjust to her new subservience is alone worth the price of admission.

Stella's work is not arduous—she chats with Martin, pushes him around the grounds in his wheelchair, and takes him to a class for disabled children in a nearby town—but she is on call from eight-thirty in the morning until Martin goes to bed; besides, the high-strung Mrs. Madden makes it clear that she considers

BRIEFLY NOTED

CHOCOLAT, by Joanne Harris (Viking; $22.95). On the eve of Ash Wednesday, Vianne Rocher, who has second sight, breezes into the village of Lansquenet, near Toulouse, with her small daughter, Anouk, and opens La Céleste Praline, a chocolate shop. Francis Reynaud, the local priest (who has his own complex relationship with temptation), takes umbrage, and a battle for the town's soul begins. Harris writes with verve and charm; if Colette and Hawthorne had collaborated, the result might have been this serious delight.

SURVIVOR, by Chuck Palahniuk (Norton; $23.95). Palahniuk's mordant second novel, like his first, "Fight Club," plays with questions of identity. Tender Branson, by virtue of not killing himself, becomes the inheritor of a puritanical suicide cult's collective wealth, and a major (if fraudulent) religious media figure. Hunted by a murderous twin brother, he is eventually forced to take temporary refuge in a twenty-thousand-acre pornography dump inspired by his preachings. By the end of this tragicomedy of sibling rivalry—on a stricken, hijacked airplane—one's sympathy for the improbable, doomed hero is fully engaged.

EMBRACING DEFEAT: JAPAN IN THE WAKE OF WORLD WAR II, by John W. Dower (Norton/New Press; $29.95). In this highly intelligent and sensitive account of the Japanese response to the American occupation, 1945-52, the reader learns almost as much about the occupiers as he does about the occupied, and a great deal about the fallacy of national stereotyping. Dower demonstrates that many traits and institutions that are now perceived (and often criticized) as being typically Japanese were considerably bolstered by the occupying American forces, which shaped Japan's state-controlled capitalism and fostered conformity through censorship. General MacArthur also insisted that Japan retain its Emperor, although many politically influential Japanese wanted him to abdicate.

AMERICAN MUSICIANS, by Lee Friedlander (D.A.P.; $49.95). The characteristic detachment of Friedlander's black-and-white documentary photographs is barely evident in these colorful portraits, which memorialize decades of a passionate engagement with vernacular music and the people who make it. As a struggling artist in the fifties, Friedlander began shooting jacket covers for the rhythm-and-blues and jazz LPs on the Atlantic label, and his imagery—a sweaty, grimacing Ray Charles, a scowling Charles Mingus, the ecstatic fury of John Coltrane mid-solo—contributed much to the records' distinctive identity. Even after achieving art-world renown, in the sixties, Friedlander continued this work, shooting country musicians for Columbia Records and, in a more personal project, documenting New Orleans marching bands and Delta blues singers. Collected here, the portraits make up an often overlooked and deeply satisfying part of his work.

Stella her social inferior, so the younger woman must steel herself against her employer's unpredictable bullying. Martin is also difficult, understandably, and Cusk conveys his pathos without sentimentality. He has large, ugly features, a small body, and withered legs. Intelligent, lonely, and bored, he is brutally hostile to Stella when they first meet and, although their relationship rapidly improves, he continues to bait and manipulate her with the unappeasable anger of the helpless.

"The Country Life" moves at an everyday pace: there is always something to do (eat lunch, ferry Martin around), none of it urgent. Cusk's ability to keep us interested in innumerable human collisions is uncanny. So is her ability to reproduce conversation. While some of her comedy is knockabout, much of it is sly, as her characters unconsciously reveal themselves by what they say: Mrs. Madden, who has very little to do, complains that she is "exhausted"; Martin's teacher laboriously extracts clichés from her unfortunate students in a discussion about "feelings," though she herself shows very little feeling for any of them; and one of Martin's sisters, a young married woman who lives nearby, explains that she was forced to drop a friend who, after losing her husband and her money, became a salesclerk. ("It was quite dreadful when she came out from behind the counter.") Cusk transcribes these self-centered stupidities with absolute precision.

At some point, our faith in Stella begins to waver. Although her observations of others remain accurate, a succession of bewildering misjudgments (which include careering around Sussex with Martin in the Maddens' car, despite the fact that she doesn't know how to drive) persuades us that she is not the sensible woman she pretends to be. When, at the novel's climax, it appears that her frankness has been a sham—she has not, after all, told us the whole truth about herself—we are not entirely surprised. Has Cusk tricked us? Yes and no. Like a mystery writer, she scatters clues and obfuscates them. Yet the novel isn't stylized, like a mystery; the Maddens and their cadre of bizarre servants seem found rather than invented, because Cusk's unobtrusive cleverness and imagination allow her characters the muddledness and ambiguity of real people. We may finally learn Stella's secrets, but she remains as fascinatingly indecipherable as anyone we know. ♦

MUSICAL EVENTS

SPLENDOR IN THE CANYONS

Messiaen ascends.

BY ALEX ROSS

On a recent Sunday, a roar of applause greeted the New York première of John Adams's "Naïve and Sentimental Music," which the Los Angeles Philharmonic played under Esa-Pekka Salonen's direction at Avery Fisher Hall. As I dashed out, the ovation was still going on. Across the street, in Alice Tully Hall, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center was about to play Olivier Messiaen's masterpiece "From the Canyons to the Stars." This audience, too, roared its approval at the end, after listening for an hour and a half with no intermission. The day had a dreamlike quality for one who believes in the difficult cause of contemporary classical music: for a moment, the whole world seemed to like the stuff. In the case of the Messiaen concert, what might have been an intellectually satisfying event became an emotionally thrilling one. "Canyons" is a mighty creation, containing some of the most shockingly beautiful music of the last hundred years, and it deserves the aura of the extraordinary that a closely listening audience can bestow. It should—and did—create awe.

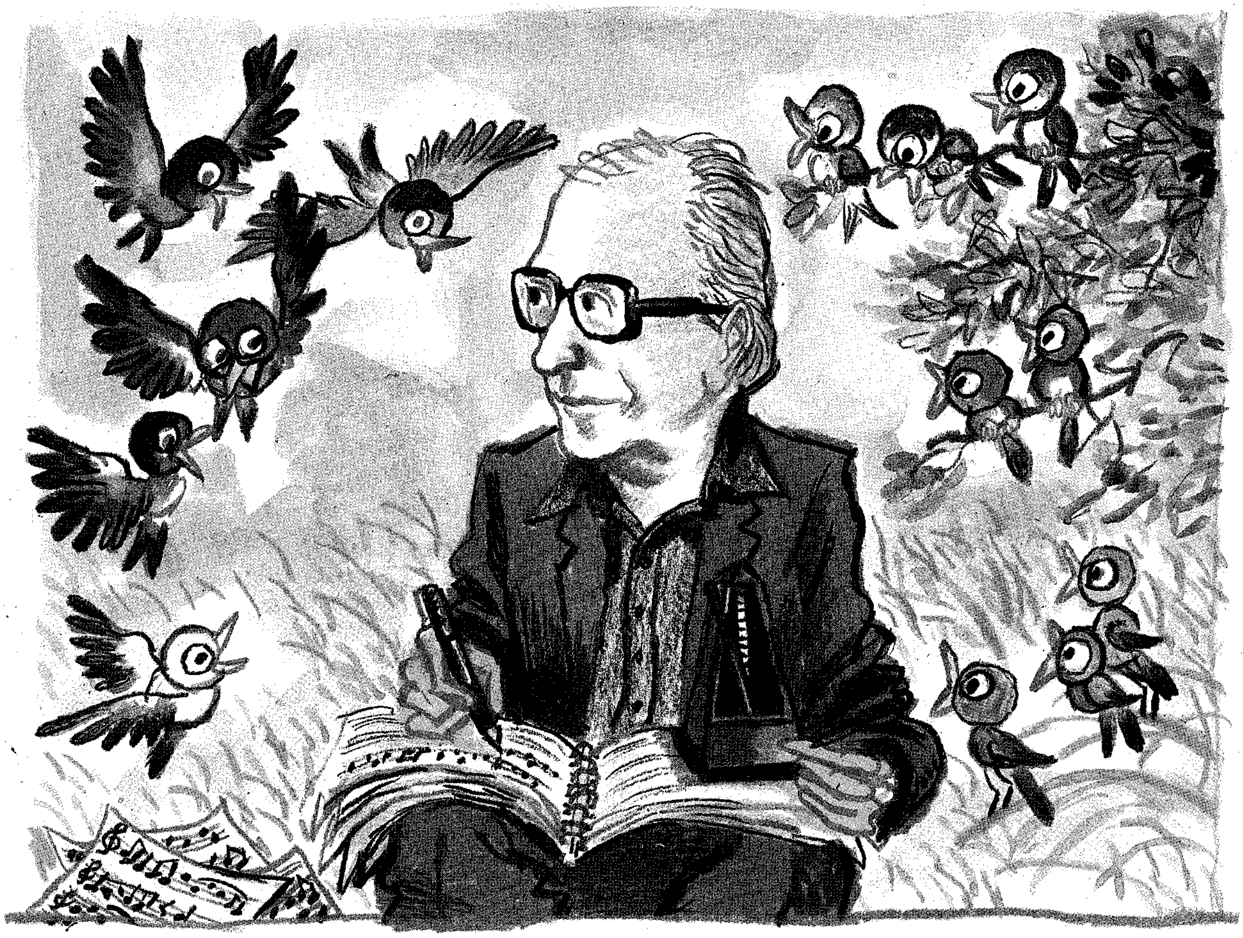
Messiaen, a devout Catholic who played the organ at La Trinité, in Paris, from 1931 until his death in 1992, is one of a handful of twentieth-century composers who have the force of personality to win audiences over. His music stops people in their tracks. I recently received an anonymous note from a reader who had heard Messiaen's "Quartet for the End of Time": it said, "Usually I don't like modern music, but I thoroughly enjoyed this piece. I had never even heard of Messiaen before." Messiaen would have turned ninety last December, and this season quite a bit of his music is being heard. The most significant tribute is Jon Gillock's traversal of the complete organ works, at Riverside Church, up on 122nd Street. The cycle began in February, will continue on April 13th and 20th, and is to end with a pair of concerts in July. Perhaps, in a few years, New York will be ready for the kind of festival that the BBC Symphony recently put on in London: most of the major works in a period of three days, with sell-out crowds in attendance.

The assumption of a composer into the canon is not an easy process, however. In February, the St. Louis Symphony, under Hans Vonk, played an all-Messiaen program in Carnegie Hall, and much of the audience rebelled. A well-dressed elderly man behind me heard the first notes of "Oiseaux Exotiques" and exclaimed to his wife, in a loud voice, "Aw, *shit*." The "Turangalîla" Symphony followed, and people walked out in droves. Go figure: music that radiates the simplest, sweetest kind of beauty aroused disgust. The problem, plainly, was that this audience didn't know what it was in for. The St. Louis was playing in a subscription series called "Concertos Plus," and even though Garrick Ohlsson labored brilliantly over the piano parts of "Oiseaux" and "Turangalîla," there wasn't very much concerto. The man behind me, I believe, felt hoodwinked.

We respond to all kinds of lures in Messiaen's music—shining major chords, vitally complex rhythms, pinpoint imitations of birdsong, a feeling of wide-open spaces, moments of mind-defeating glory—but most impressive is the sense that the music *must* be this way, in each eccentric detail. Messiaen was criticized during his lifetime for his eccentricities. One moment, he would arrange pitch and rhythm in geometries that could give serialists the chills; the next, he'd splash about in steamy harmonies straight out of "Rosenkavalier." His perpetual motion between the natural and the constructed went against the grain of modern music, which was more concerned with blending sounds into an abstract whole. Messiaen looks less strange, however, next to the nineteenth-century Romantics. As happened with Berlioz and Mahler, the oddity of his choices fades in time, and their conviction grows.

What binds Messiaen's music together is his fanatically consistent personal style. It surfaces in his first published work, "Le Banquet Céleste," which Jon Gillock played on his second program at Riverside Church. The piece has twenty-five bars, and Gillock took seven minutes to play it; he lingered over every chord, but the music only gained in lustre. The chords themselves are familiar, even trite—triads, dominant sevenths, and so forth—but the relationships among them are surprising. Like Strauss, Messiaen often moves across a tritone (C to F-sharp) instead of the usual fifth (C to G). With new schemes of modulation and new systems of scales, tonality has been rearranged from the inside. The result is a music that pleases the ear with agreeable harmony while speaking its own idiosyncratic language. Much is familiar in Messiaen's music, but nothing is secondhand.

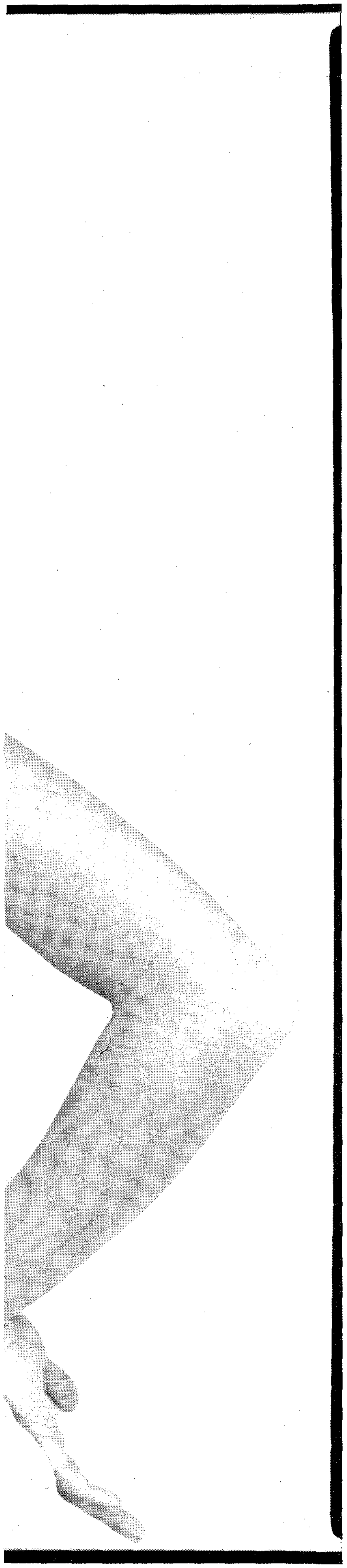
The sweetness sometimes threatens to run amok. Messiaen loved triads with added sixths—C major plus an A, for example. If you play those notes in a rapid upward arpeggio on the piano while holding down the pedal, you have the closing flourish of a bit of cocktail music. Messiaen acknowledges the loungey quality of his harmony in the "Chant d'amour II" movement of "Turangalîla": the piano does the cocktail arpeggio and a woozy vibraphone joins in. There might as well be a chanteuse in a tight dress standing to one side. What I missed in Hans Vonk's "Turangalîla"—a strong, athletic performance—was the note of loopiness. The intensity of Messiaen's Catholic beliefs should not blind us to his wit and glitz. Jon Gillock, too, seems a little too absorbed in the serious, spiritual Messiaen. His performance of the vast "Méditations sur le Mystère de la Sainte Trinité" was a miracle of suspended time, but his "Nativité du Seigneur" sometimes trod where it should have danced. His style should be a better match for the booming prayers of "Apparition de l'Église Éternelle," which opens his next program, on April 13th, and for the two-hour apocalypse of "Livre du Saint Sacrement," which ends the series, on July 20th. If you do not have the fear of God, that piece may put it in you.



Messiaen: There's a certain loopiness to the majesty of his music.

"From the Canyons to the Stars" is Messiaen's greatest work because it has the widest frame of reference. Alice Tully commissioned it for her eponymous hall, where it was first performed in 1974; incredibly, it wasn't heard there again until the Chamber Music Society revived it this year. Messiaen took inspiration from a trip he made to the great bright-colored Utah canyons—Bryce, Cedar Breaks, Zion Park. The choruses of birds contain rhythmic complexities that defy analysis; the wind-and-brass theme of "Zion Park" has a swaying, bowing beauty that defies description. In "Zion Park," the finale, a simple trick

Natacha Régnier and Elodie Bouchez as the inseparable angels—one flying, one falling—in Erick Zonca's first feature



tograph by Brigitte Lacombe.

provides the ultimate revelation: Messiaen starts a progression in A major but doesn't finish it, and for the ten-minute span of the movement he holds the cadence out of reach. At a point where our hunger for the missing chord becomes unbearable—the brass cry out for it three times in desperation—there is a supernova of A major, billowing into the lowest and highest reaches of the orchestra and then whiting out in fortissimo strings.

Reinbert de Leeuw, the Dutch avant-garde maestro, conducted an expanded roster of Chamber Music Society musicians in "Canyons." It's the second time I've seen de Leeuw conduct the piece; the first was at Tanglewood, in 1994. He seems to have changed his thinking about it considerably, now pushing forward where he once held back. I missed the almost infinite elongation of the ending of "Zion Park"—the same effect that he achieved in his splendid 1990 recording of "Canyons," on the Montaigne label—but this time he shaped the music into a more joyfully coherent whole. Peter Serkin provided a counterweight in the piano solos, playing hard chords that glittered like quartz. William Purvis, the horn soloist, gave a note-perfect rendition of the sixth movement, "Interstellar Call." He and Serkin added an effect that is not in the score but that Messiaen approved: some of the louder horn notes were allowed to echo canyon style against pedalled piano strings. There was one oddity in the music which Purvis wasn't able to address—the fact that the three-note horn theme in the tenth movement is identical to the signature tune of NBC. Over time, this will be less of a problem, as NBC goes away and Messiaen remains.

ADAMS'S "Naïve and Sentimental Music" lacks the Messiaenic virtue of simplicity. In its meticulously crescendoing first and third movements, it seems to be grasping for the kind of power that Messiaen could take out of the ambient air. But the second movement, "Mother of the Man," is something else. It begins with a tentative, winsome tune on acoustic guitar over flickering pulses of harp—a sound-world reminiscent of Mahler's late works but without any of the usual Mahler-knockoff string writing. The middle section is a chilling tableau of irregular ascending scales and overlapping swells and fades in the brass. A crescendo starts to build—again?—but Adams lets it scatter away in high, pounding piano octaves. The guitar song resumes, quaveringly, in a freshly haunted space. In his recent works, this impatiently questing American composer seems to be making his way back to the minimalist grandeur of his eighties masterpieces—"Harmonielehre" and "Nixon in China." But in "Mother of the Man" he has arrived, perhaps by accident, at a startling new sound: Mahler in the desert, a lonesome guitar. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

WINGING IT

The seraphic democracy of "The Dreamlife of Angels."

BY ANTHONY LANE

SOUND
SCENE
TAKE
1
2
3
PROD
Etc...

THE first thing you hear in "The Dreamlife of Angels," before any images appear onscreen, is the scrape and shuffle of someone walking along, as if beneath a heavy load. The someone is Isa (Elodie Bouchez), who drifts around France in a T-shirt and baggy sweater, with all her worldly goods on her back, picking up odd jobs and even odder friendships. But she lacks the daze of the traditional drifter; her round eyes are dark with determination, as if she were aiming to meet a goal that had yet to be named. Far from being out of her head, Isa has a knack for shining a light into the tumbledown minds of others; no wonder she latches on to Marie (Natacha

Régnier), whose spirit is as fierce and flustered as Isa's is serene. Put simply, Erick Zonca's film is a record of their acquaintance; it also happens to be one of the best French movies since Jules met Jim.

The two girls come together in a clothing factory in Lille. Isa, the newcomer, needs a place to sleep, so Marie takes her home. The apartment she's living in belongs to somebody else—to a friend who died in a car crash, and whose daughter, Sandrine, is still comatose in the hospital. Marie, who is flinchingly sensitive to her own troubles and half blind to those of others, has taken the opportunity to move in, but you sense the spectral presence of the previous owners—especially that of Sandrine, whose teen-age journal, complete with the usual scramble of ecstasy and frustration, is found and studied by Isa. Zonca is endlessly alert to the lives that hover on the fringes of our own; he sinks us deep into the tale of the two girls, yet, even in the midst of one of their arguments, you hear someone practicing scales on the piano. And the final shot of the film moves calmly away from Isa along a row of unknown women, all of them hard at work, until it settles at random on a new face, as if to say: It could have been her.

It is this conviction—a quiet, democratic intensity, the highest virtue of French cinema—that nudges the secondary characters onstage. Isa and Marie try to talk their way into a rock concert, but a pair of burly bouncers jeer at their efforts and send them packing. That might have been the end of it, but then they all bump into one another in a bar, and soon, without really trying, Charly (Patrick Mercado) and Fredo (Jo Prestia) are looming large—not difficult, since both of them are built and coiffed like yetis. In a moment of insane courage, Marie even goes to bed with Charly; people have won the Légion d'Honneur for lesser acts, although what stays with you from the scene is the hulking sweetness of the man. Graced with the semantic skill that is the birthright of every French citizen, Charly points out that fatness is purely a matter of vocabulary; and from here on he and Fredo, against all expectations, grow into the sanest and most reliable figures in the film.

At the other end of the evolutionary scale lies Chriss (Grégoire Colin)—playboy, restaurateur, and full-time worm. He gets Marie out of trouble when she is caught shoplifting, and then, as if he had earned a favor, sleeps with her. Their affair, if that is the right word for a few breathy writhings on corpse-white sheets, wrenches Marie away from her friends—Isa and the bouncers—and deludes her into a flickering belief that love is in the air. But Chriss is in love only with himself, and the closeup of Marie's eyes as she lies next to him is the loneliest shot in the film. The sex in Zonca's movie was strong enough to earn it an NC-17 rating, and he had to make additional cuts to bring it down to an R. This is no surprise; I stopped taking the Motion Picture Association of America Rating Board seriously when it demanded the removal, from a trailer for "Six Degrees of Separation," of a glimpse of the naked Adam on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. (That Michelangelo—what a sleazebag *he* was.) The irony is that the bedroom scenes in "The Dreamlife of Angels" are among the most dramatically telling in the film: Chriss conquers Marie out of contempt, while she screws herself ever deeper into despair.

If that makes the movie sound like a drag, fear not. I have seen it three times, and even now I find it hard to take a reading of the tone: it has a lightness, a pace and buoyancy, that deters the tragic, and yet it knocks at the heart with an insistence that leaves comedy behind. Everything you need to know about "The Dreamlife of Angels" is there in the faces of the two actresses. They were joint winners of the best-actress award at Cannes last year, and it would be invidious to try to separate them. Régnier is fair and reedy, with a volatility that not only sweeps her between moods, from flashes of warmth to wintry blasts of ire, but seems to change her physically: the Botticelli beauty, cheeks flushing with desire, can tighten within seconds into the pinched plainness of the spoiled brat. Bouchez is the epitome of toothy tolerance, with a smile that can encompass virtually anything—but not all—that experience can provide. She looks so *on* for everything: during the course of the film, we see Isa roller-skating, impersonating Madonna, and eating cold pizza from the fridge. When I saw Bouchez in films like "Clubbed to Death" (1995) and André Téchiné's "Wild Reeds" (1993), her dark hair was long; now it's cropped like a boy's, as if she were readying herself to play Peter Pan or Viola, and you can't help focussing on the tiny white scar that nicks her right eyebrow. Did Isa, of all people, get into a fight? Her history has certainly been rough enough, and yet such is her effusion of goodness that one shudders to think of a hand being raised against her.

THE film feels so grounded, and the camera is so responsive to this pair of helplessly expressive creatures, that halfway through I began to wonder what the title was about. Only afterward did it strike me as true and fit: there is not a hint of moral tutorial in "The Dreamlife of Angels," but it resounds with a kind of scruffy miraculous urgency. Isa writes in Sandrine's diary, as if bringing her up to date might bring her back to consciousness, and she spends a night of vigil in the hospital chapel—all this, remember, for a girl she does not know. Marie, on the other hand, is beyond even Isa's help, and there is a scene near the end which rocks you back with shock; it has been a long time since I heard an audience gasp in unison. Isa, we finally realize, is a full-fledged seraph, gusting through life on a wing and a prayer; Marie is a falling angel, and her descent is terrible to behold. One day—her only happy day—she goes to the coast with Chriss and runs along the sand, like the fugitive Antoine at the close of "The 400 Blows." But he at least got to see the sea; Marie is all in a mist.

Looking back on such a scene, it's hard to tell where character ends and texture begins—so much of the movie seems to unfold next to the skin. Chriss is a thin-eyed monster, but I will remember him best by the glass of water that Marie slings in his face, and by the sharp, stinging slap that Isa delivers when he asks her to do his dirty work—to tell Marie that it's over. He is flush with money, while the girls are forced to scavenge on the margins of society, and yet all of them are strangely levelled by the flat northern light of Lille; for a film that could so easily have settled for the politically plaintive, or for a satirical snarl, "The Dreamlife of Angels" is startlingly fair, as if its prime duty were not to cast stones but to oversee the stumbling dance of its disparate souls. Like "Leaving Las Vegas," which was equally attentive to individual faces, and to their terror of desolation, Zonca's film was shot on 16 mm., a process that—as his cinematographer, Agnès Godard, has pointed out—creates its own form of intimacy. This eager simplicity, a rebuke to the blockbuster, appears to be hurrying back into style: "The Celebration," which makes the same fervent demands on its performers, was shot on video and transferred to film. Neither work, it goes without saying, was nominated this year for an Academy Award: how can you hope to qualify for best foreign-language film if you fail to include a cute little kid in your script?

Not only is "The Dreamlife of Angels" resolutely unchildish; it is not even a young man's movie. Zonca has never made a full-length feature before, and he is forty-three; rising from his story is an unmistakable sense that, unlike some of the young guns making American pictures, he has kicked around, and he knows something of existence—of the world that matters—beyond the hothouse of cinema. "The Dreamlife of Angels" was more than three years in the writing, and Zonca shot enough footage for a three-hour film, before chopping it back to two. Hence, perhaps, its extraordinary rustle of discovery: most films we see these days seem wrapped, locked into place before they've even started, but you feel this one probing its way ahead, more than capable of twisting and trailing in a dozen directions. What began in the manner of a fogbound documentary ends up with the grave clarity of a requiem. In the meantime, we have grown as near to the characters as any audience could wish to: we hear the close-up crackle of Marie's cigarette, and we watch Isa's red, rubbed fingers resting on the smooth white hand of the unconscious Sandrine. You look at these people and think, Whose life is it anyway? It is theirs, and it is Erick Zonca's, and it is ours. ♦

THE THEATRE

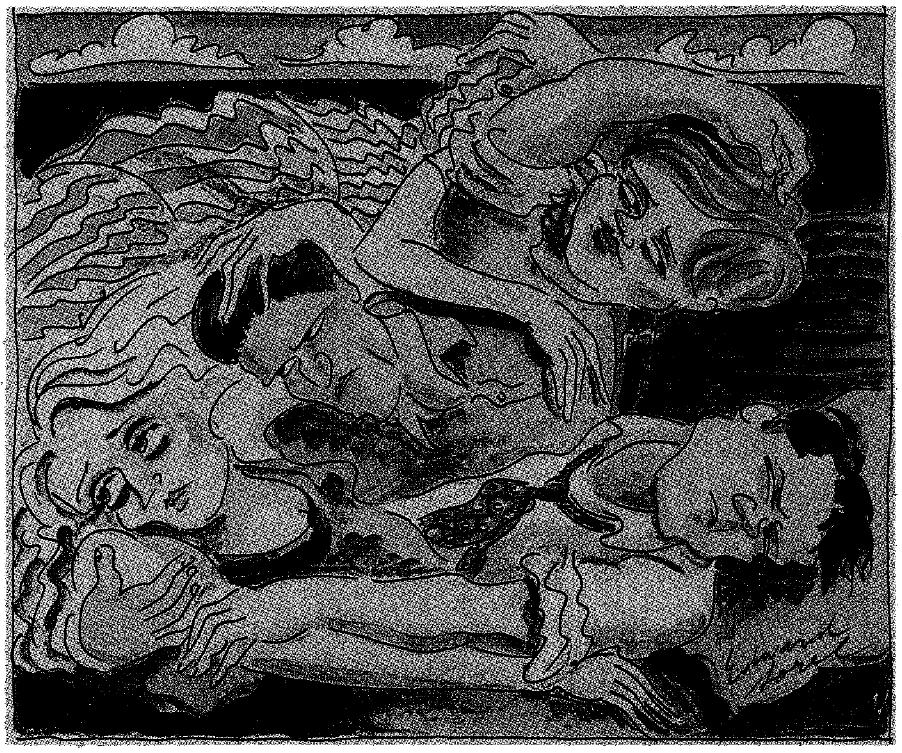
THAT LOVING FEELING

Patrick Marber's bawdy badinage, and a summer share to remember.

BY JOHN LAHR

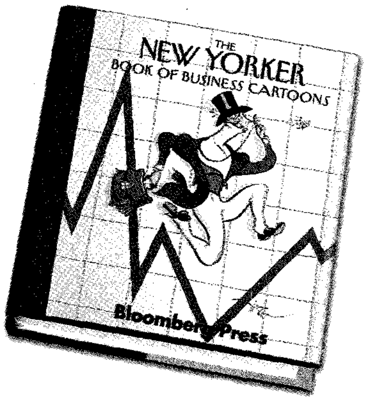
TOWARD the end of Patrick Marber's "Closer" (at the Music Box), a slick dissection of the anatomy of desire, a doctor in this sexual merry-go-round confronts his rival. "Ever *seen* a human heart? It looks like a fist wrapped in blood," he says, and he adds, "Our flesh is ferocious." The play, which takes place in London over five years in the nineteen-nineties, follows four characters as they meet, mate, and move on in a kind of algebra of solitude which is factored out before our eyes. Marber's shrewdly designed story brings the characters up against the limits of their hearts. He gives them jobs, for instance, that ironically hint at their particular type of lostness. Alice (Anna Friel), who has assumed an invented identity and whose "big want" is the sad little wish to be loved, trades in fantasy as a lap dancer. The doctor, Larry (Ciaran Hinds), who craves flesh and intimacy but can't seem to get under the skin, is a dermatologist. Anna (Natasha Richardson) is a photographer; she takes pictures of strangers and derelict buildings but is a stranger to herself. And Dan (Rupert Graves) is a writer, a "reserved" type whose search for emotional excitement is an escape from his own sense of dread; he works on a newspaper obituary desk. In their betrayals and their sexual bravado, Marber's characters dramatize relationships as bewildering acts of chance and approximation where the beloved is a shifting, forever unknown quantity.

"Closer" began its award-winning life in the small box of the Royal National's Cottesloe Theatre, where the proximity to the audience in the raked auditorium made both the dialogue and the relationships visceral and shocking. In its journey to the West End and now to Broadway, a certain sense of self-importance has crept into the staging, signalled by the monumentality of Vicki Mortimer's somewhat ungainly



Clockwise from left: Richardson, Hinds, Friel, and Graves, entangled in "Closer."

Very funny business, indeed!



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set. Here the behemoth gray turrets of an old Victorian hospital frame the stage, and Victorian funerary plaques (from one of which, it turns out, Alice has taken her name) rise high on the back wall—memorials not just to the dead but to an age of sentiment which existed before the notion of individualism became virulent. The massive gray set, combined with the Music Box's large proscenium, keeps the interactions at a distance and tends to diminish the clout of the play, which still manages to score but feels less like the knockout it did in London.

Marber writes cagey, expert dialogue—a feast for his uniformly strong English cast, which is dominated by Friel, a pint-size powerhouse at once fierce and fragile. She is a ravishing newcomer, whose authenticity makes it impossible to take your eyes off her. "Men want a girl who looks like a boy," she tells Graves, in as brazen an opening encounter as any playwright has contrived in the last decade. "They want to protect her but she must be a survivor. And she must *come* . . . like a train . . . but with *elegance*." Marber, who began as a standup comic, can be very funny. At one point, after Dan has left Alice for Anna, he puts Anna through a sexual third degree that quickly gets to the issue of faking orgasms. Summoning up her considerable sparky sangfroid, Natasha Richardson makes Marber's sentences sizzle. "*Occasionally* . . . I have faked it," she says. "It's not important, you don't *make* me come. I *come* . . . you're . . . 'in the area' . . . providing valiant assistance." In the first ever staged cybersex scene—a filthy but hilarious demonstration of the absence that lurks behind appetite—Dan, pretending to be Anna, and Larry slump over their computers, typing out their sexual fantasies, while the audience reads the hot sex between them on a screen. As the badinage scrolls down ("Epic Tits," "Sultan of Twat," "Wear my wet knickers"), Marber is neatly establishing both a plot point and a thematic point. "Desire, like the world, is an accident," Dan types, luring both Larry and Anna into a practical joke that turns into a relationship. "The best sex is anon. We live as we dream, ALONE."

Marber's writing is tight and well paced; his staging is not. The transitions between scenes are cumbersome, and as a way of underlining some of his tastiest passages he sometimes encourages his actors to slow down their delivery, which undermines rather than highlights the language. For instance, when Anna and Alice finally swap straight talk about the guys they've shared, Anna's scintillating aside about male denial (a passage that I singled out in a previous review) loses its exhilaration as Richardson parses the idea into a few breaths instead of expressing it at a swaggering clip. "We arrive with our . . . 'baggage' and for a while they're brilliant, they're baggage handlers," she says. "We say, 'Where's your baggage?' They deny all knowledge of it . . . they're '*in love*' . . . they have none." She continues, "Then . . . just as you're relaxing . . . a Great Big Juggernaut arrives . . . with *their* baggage. It Got Held Up." But Marber's ear is sharper than his eye. One of the play's visual conceits is to have the furniture from each scene—like the detritus of these blighted relationships—piled up against the back wall. By the end of the play, the characters are crowded by the debris of their collective past—a mess that has literally been left behind them. The image is ugly without being resonant, whereas Marber's crafty commercial language makes the ugly elegantly acceptable.

CHRISTOPHER DURANG is manic and heartbroken; in other words, he's a comedian whose fury takes the form of farce. "Betty's Summer Vacation" (at Playwrights Horizons), which is set in Thomas Lynch's well-designed cheap and cheerful beach house, turns into a never-ending tale of infamy: two murders, two rapes, two severed penises, one severed head, and an act of offstage incest. This catalogue of outrage makes Durang the clear winner of this year's Joe Orton "Our Lady of the Wand" Award. Orton wrote his ghoulish capriccios in the sixties; nowadays his bag of tricks—a corpse, a loose eyeball, a severed hand—seems an almost innocent way of shocking the audience. But Durang's characters, who are sitcom stereotypes pushed to the limit of their congenital geniality by the mischievous author, are beyond shock; they are mutants, whose hearts and minds have been warped by the collective tabloid unconscious into a bright media cliché. "We don't talk much because her father incested her when he was drunk, and I never did anything about it because I was co-dependent," the well-named

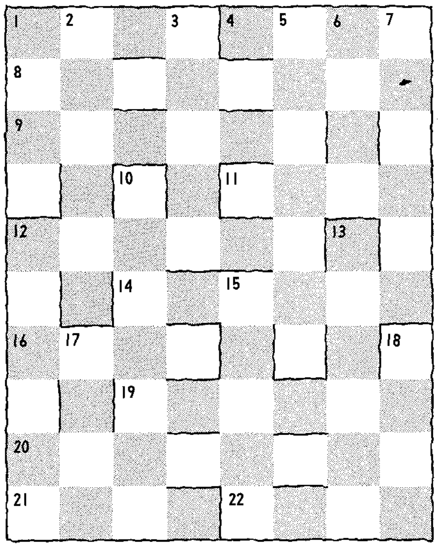
Mrs. Siezmagraff (Kristine Nielsen) says of her daughter, Trudy (Julie Lund), who has invited Betty (Kellie Overbey) into a summer time-share at the beach. A seismograph measures the disturbances underneath the earth's surface; what Durang hears underneath the culture is the rumble of an infernal media emptiness.

A laugh track, which personifies this static, is the ghost in the house's attic: while Durang sets out the sensational externals of his plot in Act I, offstage voices serve as a superego to the group, cheering them on and interrupting them. "Nothing's happening onstage. I'm getting bored," they say at one point. In Act II, in a genuinely inventive piece of comic business, well managed by the director, Nicholas Martin, Durang has the voices materialize: they drop through the ceiling onto the living-room sofa. Dressed in black flak jackets, with black bags on their feet and connected to each other by tubing, the voices judge, goad, and interject opinions as Mrs. Siezmagraff, in a Court TV rant hilariously performed by Nielsen, tries to defend Trudy and one of her wayward housemates, Keith (Nat DeWolf), for their carnage. "We find him very disturbing, but he's also strangely sweet," the voices say in unison about Keith and his habit of cutting up bodies. "We plan to nominate him for a People's Choice Award." When Keith complains of a headache, they add, "Why don't you kill someone, then?" The voices are the culture's unslakable appetite for barbarity: like petulant kids banging the dinner table, they bleat for the gruel of decadence. Thrill is the antidote to emptiness. "Sex. Murder. Mayhem. Human Interest Stories About Kittens. Kitty and José Menendez Served in a Casserole!" they shout.

Durang wants to purge his mind, and society, of this media pollution, and he contrives to blow the summer home and most of its inhabitants to smithereens. At the finale, Betty is left standing by the sea and reflecting on her summer vacation. The sound of the ocean is more important than what she says. The crashing of the waves works on the audience like the natural rhythm of breath; for a moment, before the curtain falls on Durang's cold but clever world, he lets us glimpse the mysterious peace that sensationalism makes us forget—the sweet shock of the eternal. ♦

8 x 10 CRYPTIC

NO. 83 BY MIKE SHENK



ACROSS

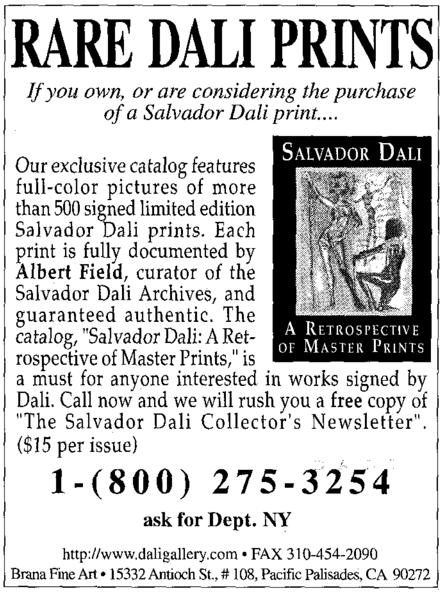
1 Stalk New York ballplayers from behind (4)
4 Running back swallowed bit of French cheese (4)
8 Singer appearing in Pretoria mostly (4,4)
9 A public-opinion survey by love god (6)
11 Put an asterisk next to start of sales pitch (4)
12 Clumsy rube in Asian country (6)
14 Animation pioneer's urges I'd held back (6)
16 Average individual's ice-cream-parlor order (4)
19 Basic maneuver at nine (6)
20 Succeed with humor about a beer barrel (4,4)
21 Different part of Israel settled (4)
22 With its sound, fly annoyed (4)

DOWN

1 Spaniard's first name for men only (4)
2 Drunks destroyed poster (6)
3 Fellow on the outskirts of Illinois city known for opera (5)
5 Gushing dwarf keeps it up (7)
6 On the way up, received a loose gown (4)
7 Like something used by a waiter in error (6)
10 Rising sun enveloping good-hearted bores (7)
12 Turned into bird's bill target, reportedly (6)
13 Rubbish by flower garden upset fellow with bills to pay (6)
15 Family members penning grand melodies (5)
17 Ring with friend's birthstone (4)
18 Surrender nut to an auditor (4)

• •

The solution to puzzle No. 82 appears on page 42. For a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an E-mail to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.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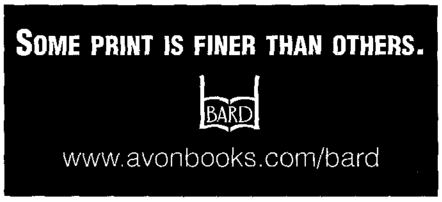
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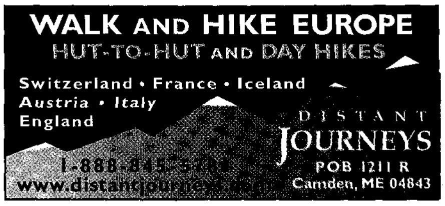
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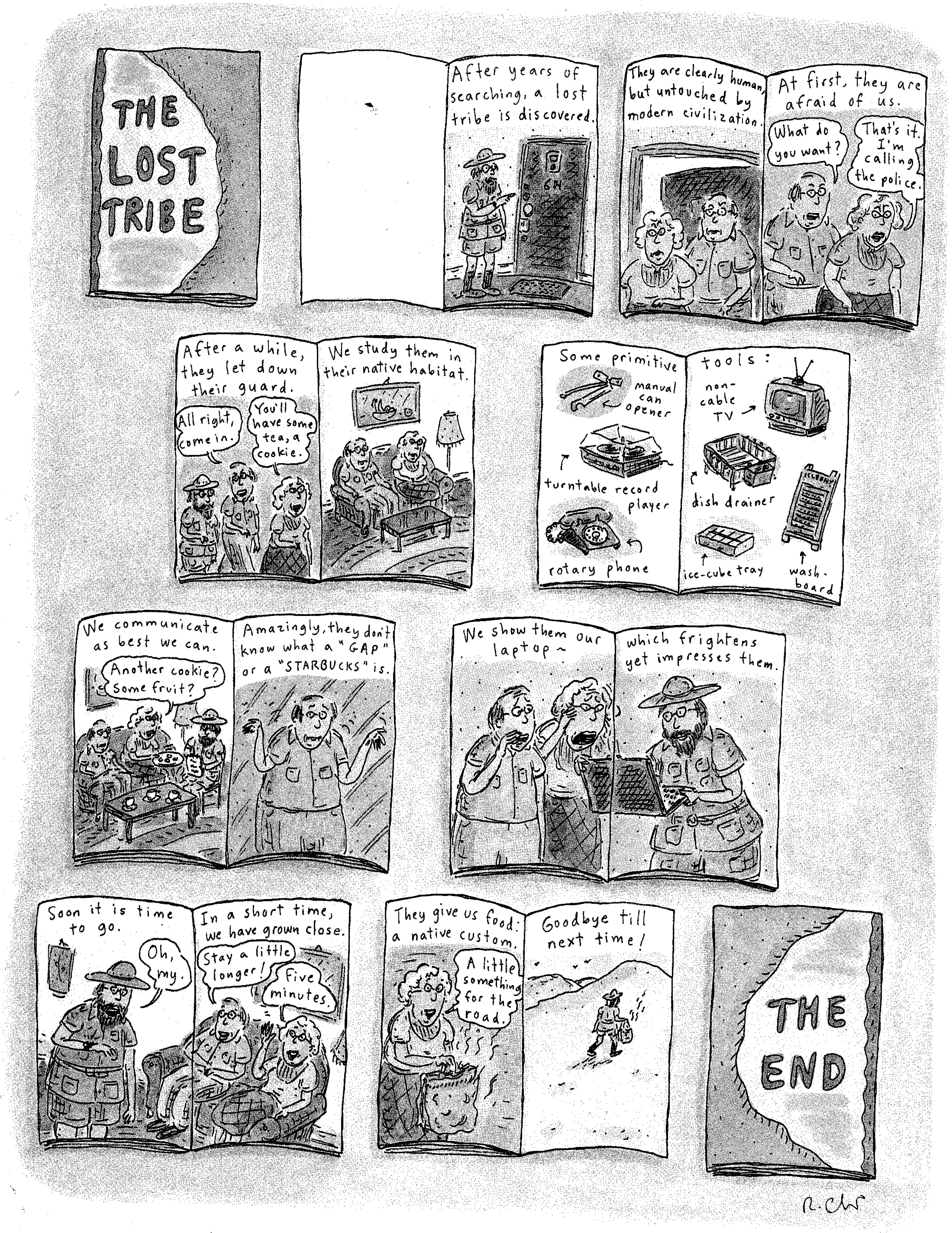
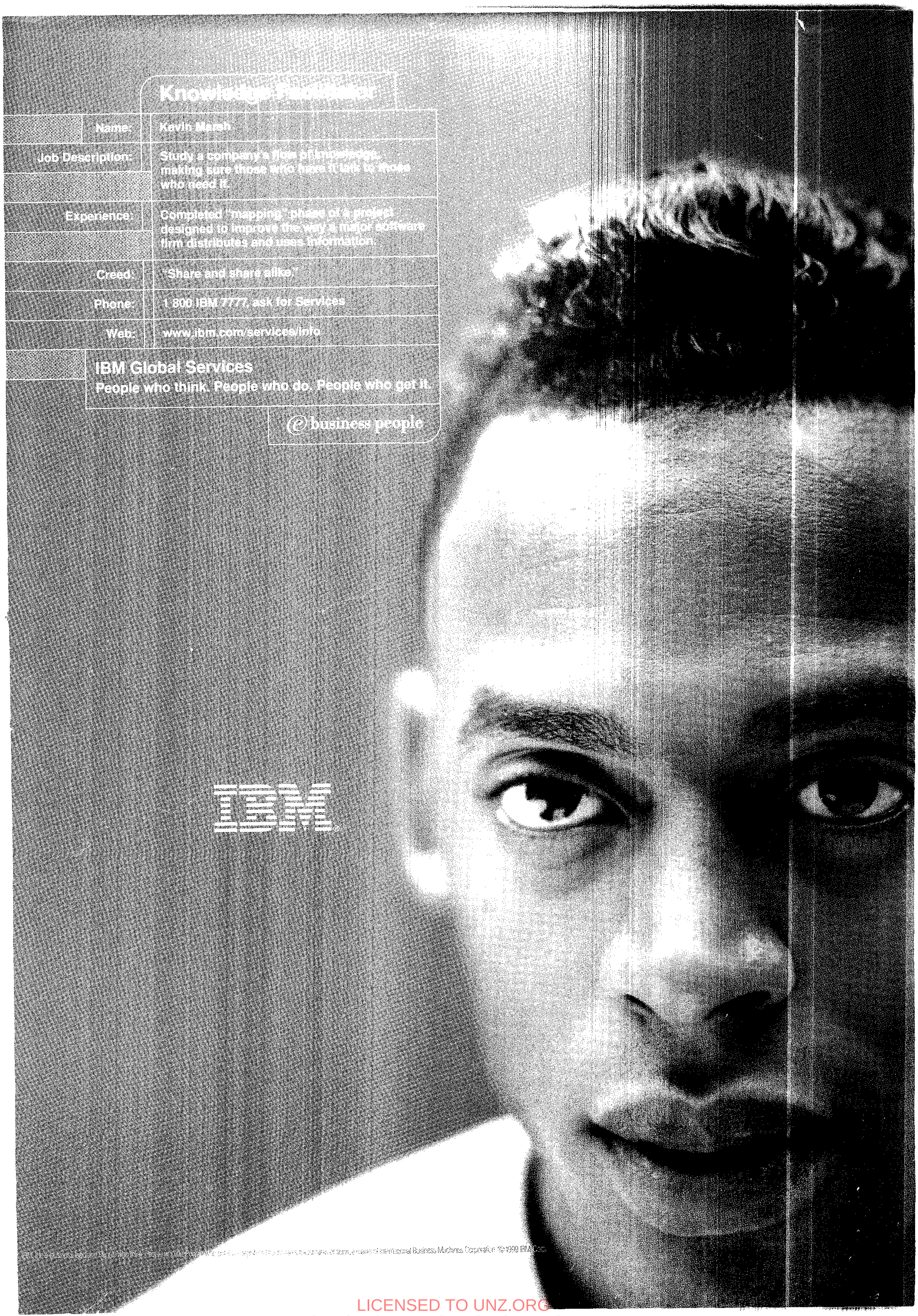

THE LOST TRIBE
After years of searching, a lost tribe is discovered.
6N
They are clearly human, but untouched by modern civilization.
At first, they are afraid of us.
What do you want?
That's it. I'm calling the police.
After a while, they let down their guard.
All right, come in.
You'll have some tea, a cookie.
We study them in their native habitat.
Some primitive tools:
manual can opener
turntable record player
rotary phone
non-cable TV
dish drainer
ice-cube tray
wash-board
We communicate as best we can.
Another cookie? Some fruit?
Amazingly, they don't know what a "GAP" or a "STARBUCKS" is.
We show them our laptop –
which frightens yet impresses them.
Soon it is time to go.
Oh, my.
In a short time, we have grown close.
Stay a little longer!
Five minutes.
They give us food: a native custom.
A little something for the road.
Goodbye till next time!
THE END



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